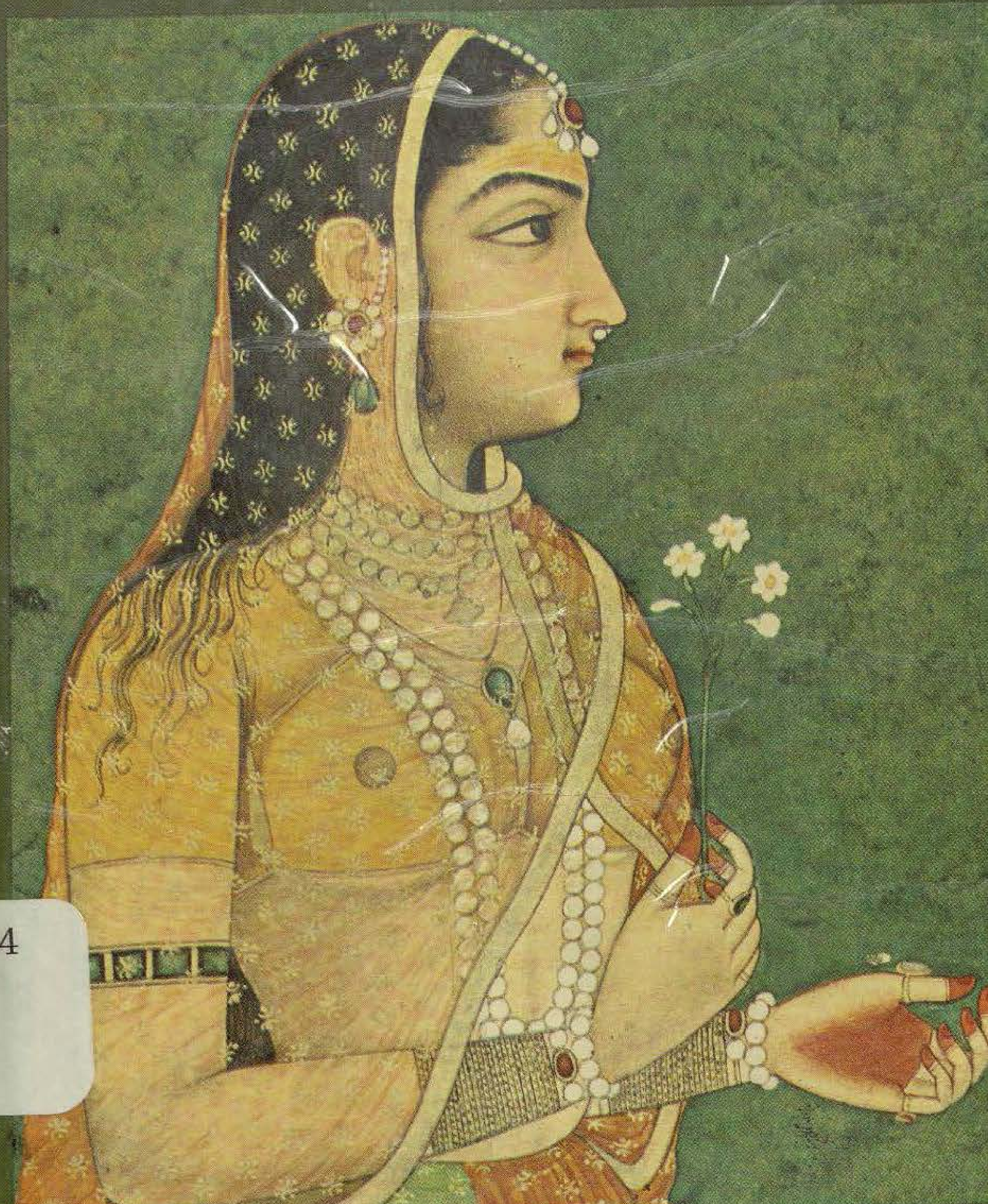
Indian Miniatures



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Cameo

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La Miniatura Indiana

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General rules, in attempting to evaluate the expressive and artistic qualities of ancient paintings by means of anecdotes, narratives and vague literary references, are very misleading—when the paintings have been lost.

If we are to believe certain written accounts and anecdotes it would seem that some artists were able to imitate nature so successfully that they could mislead even the acute perception of animals. But in the case of Indian miniature paintings, local or religious literary references do have the great merit of helping us to understand how the people of the time 'saw' and 'interpreted' these tiny compositions, descriptions of which immediately impress us by the originality of their subject matter, their bright colours, and refined treatment of detail.

To take one example, in the sixth act of the *Śakuntalā* by Kālidāsa—the most famous of Indian classical fragments, whose subtle poetry and delicate

emotion fascinated Goethe—King Dushyanta has lost his lady love, Śakuntalā, as the result of a curse. The unhappy lover consoles himself by looking at his mistress's portrait and asks a friend: 'There are three figures in this little painting. They are three girls and they are all beautiful. Which of them is Śakuntalā? Who do you think she is?' The friend replies: 'She who is leaning rather wearily against the mango tree, its leaves glistening with the water she has thrown over it. She extends her arm with infinite grace, her face is slightly flushed with the heat and flowers entwine her streaming hair to fall together over her shoulders. She must be Śakuntalā and the others her friends or maidservants.' Naturally, the king's friend was guessing but the realistic intentions of the picture are obvious. It was more than a portrait, for the artist had caught the subject at a particular moment in her life and had transformed it into a poetic episode.

This painter's talent and gift for minute detail corresponded perfectly to the aims and abilities of Indian miniaturists. Even when they worked in conventional forms they were still able to express profound psychological values in their compositions and insert details that had poetic as well as descriptive significance. Even clearer is another, somewhat scabrous, episode narrated by the prince Mitragupta in the *Daśakumarāracarita* (The Tales of the Ten Princes) which was written by Dandin in the 7th century AD. There was once at Mathurā—a great city

in central northern India—a young rake who assiduously frequented the most famous courtesans. One day he happened to see a miniature of a young lady in the hand of a wandering painter. Immediately struck by the beauty of the unknown lady, he asked the artist: 'Master, I notice some contrasting features here. This soft body is of a lady of quality. Her slim figure and the pallid beauty of her features reveal her rank, but he who possesses such treasures has not enjoyed them as much as he might, for her glance is still haughty. She is not the wife of someone who goes on long journeys abroad for her hair is not tied up in plaits nor are there any other signs to indicate an absent husband or widowhood. Here is a sign on her left side: she must be the wife of some old merchant who is not excessively endowed with virile strength. She fully merits a man of great talent to execute her portrait, as may be seen from the quality of the work.'

Obviously the painter who thus involuntarily launched the young man on a new amorous adventure had made an effort to achieve something more profound and subtle than mere physiognomic resemblance, and the story stresses an aspect peculiar to all Indian art, both Moslem and Hindu. When they represented human beings, Indian artists always tried to characterise them in depth. They attempted to express the very essence of royalty in images of the Raja, the sanctity of ascetics and monks, the force and courage of warriors and the rhythm and heartbeats of life itself in every scene.



1. Buddhist divinity seated in yoga posture on a lotus. Pāla school, 1087. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



2. Buddhist divinity seated on a lotus throne with the figure of a worshipper on the left and a flaming demon on the right. Pāla school, 1087. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

1. Buddhist divinity seated in yoga posture on a lotus. Pāla school, 1087. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Miniature from a Bengalese manuscript. The technique and style are derived from those of mural paintings as may be seen by the proportions and chromatic and figurative conventions.

2. Buddhist divinity seated on a lotus throne with the figure of a worshipper on the left and a flaming demon on the right. Pāla school, 1087. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Miniature from a Bengalese manuscript. The centre figure stands out against the background with a luminous clarity appropriate to its serene expression. Of the two minor characters, the demon, shown as a deformed and clumsy dwarf, is of the *gana* type which belongs to the South Indian iconographic repertory.

3. The birth of Buddha. Nepalese school. Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University. From a manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The future Buddha is here represented as the axis of the world and the support of the universe. The composition is completed by divinities and handmaids.

4. *Avalokiteśvara*, the compassionate divinity of Buddhism. Nepalese school, 1105. Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University. Cover of a manuscript. The Bodhisattva is enclosed by the lotus in a luminous aura and is wearing a halo. Note the crown, the enormous earrings and the stylised scarf.



3. The birth of Buddha.



4. *Avalokiteśvara*, the compassionate divinity of Buddhism. Nepalese school, 1105. Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University.

Besides this, both stories emphasise a particular aspect of Indian custom which conferred great importance on a portrait that could often be used for social and, obviously, erotico-sentimental occasions. The nature of Indian figurative arts, their diffusion and use, suggest an embryonic 'civilisation of the image' in which painting and sculpture serve not only to create a powerful means of diffusion for religious thought destined for the masses, but touch upon the most varied aspects of surrounding life. This does not mean that profane painting was not sometimes practised by cultured men and women, who took pleasure in painting and whose only aim was to create a work of art that could be appreciated by the restricted circle of their own friends and acquaintances, if not by the general public. Miniatures which were also executed as illustrations to texts were not only small-scale, highly detailed pictorial compositions, but were generally profane in the period of their greatest splendour. Sometimes they were used as illustrations for religious books, depicting images that had affinities with large-scale mural paintings.

As a result Indian pictorial art, which ranked as one of the foremost arts with literature, theatre and music, was divided into two categories: mural painting and painting on wooden panels or on cloth. The division was more than a technical one. The great cycles of paintings on temple and palace walls attracted the interest of a public far greater than that which could appreciate and understand paintings on

wood and cloth, even though what we now call art galleries (known as *citraśālā*) did exist for this restricted audience.

Mural paintings had a social significance and value that were greater than those of 'mobile' paintings, which were generally small in size even though the technical treatise on painting, the *śilpa-śaistra,* dealt exclusively with miniature painting. Judging from the *śilpa* and the very high quality of surviving works, which reveal an undoubtedly high degree of talent on the part of the craftsmen, it would seem that mural painting had assumed an absolute predominance over all other kinds. The scope of the technical treatises, which also dealt with the forms considered appropriate for the representation of divinities and personages, might have corresponded to a process of industrialisation which transcended the personality of the individual artist and even that of the simple 'school' (the Western type of workshop in India was barely developed) to give prominence to the corporation (*Sreni*). This industrialisation, or rather this endeavour, to achieve the most rapid and perfect execution of the work (taking into account iconographical clarity, easy comprehensibility and orthodox exactitude), corresponded to a widespread demand for pictorial works, the economic interests which this demand implied, and to the very nature of those who made them—the *śilpin.*

The name *śilpin* was used to designate painters or craftsmen who were on a much higher level than

artisans without being real artists, properly speaking, since their activity and cultural interests were different and less broad than those implied by the word 'artist' in the West.

Indian 'mobile' paintings on wood or cloth have been completely lost because of the Indian climate, and no miniature exists anterior to the 8th century. The few that have survived cannot be dated with any certainty as there is no documentary evidence relating to them before the mid-9th century AD. Not even the treatises on aesthetics which expound systems and theories—sometimes coming very close to those of Croce and Gentile a thousand years later—are of much help in determining the prevalence of one or the other type of painting. Material evidence is provided almost exclusively by literature and the theatre, the last consisting of recitation and scenography. Mentions of pictorial compositions are rare and, when they do occur, the commentaries are vague and casual. However, surviving Indian miniatures, belonging to countless different tendencies, schools and categories sometimes too numerous to be anything more consistent than an illusory phenomenon determined by the individual aspiration of some greatly imitated artist, do certainly form part of the 'mobile' paintings of a more ancient period and of an ancient miniature art which went with it and which has totally disappeared. This is proved by the two stories mentioned, among other things.

The full flowering of miniature art began when



5. Kālaka converting King Śaka (above); Balamitra and his wife (below). Jain art, *c.* 1400. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

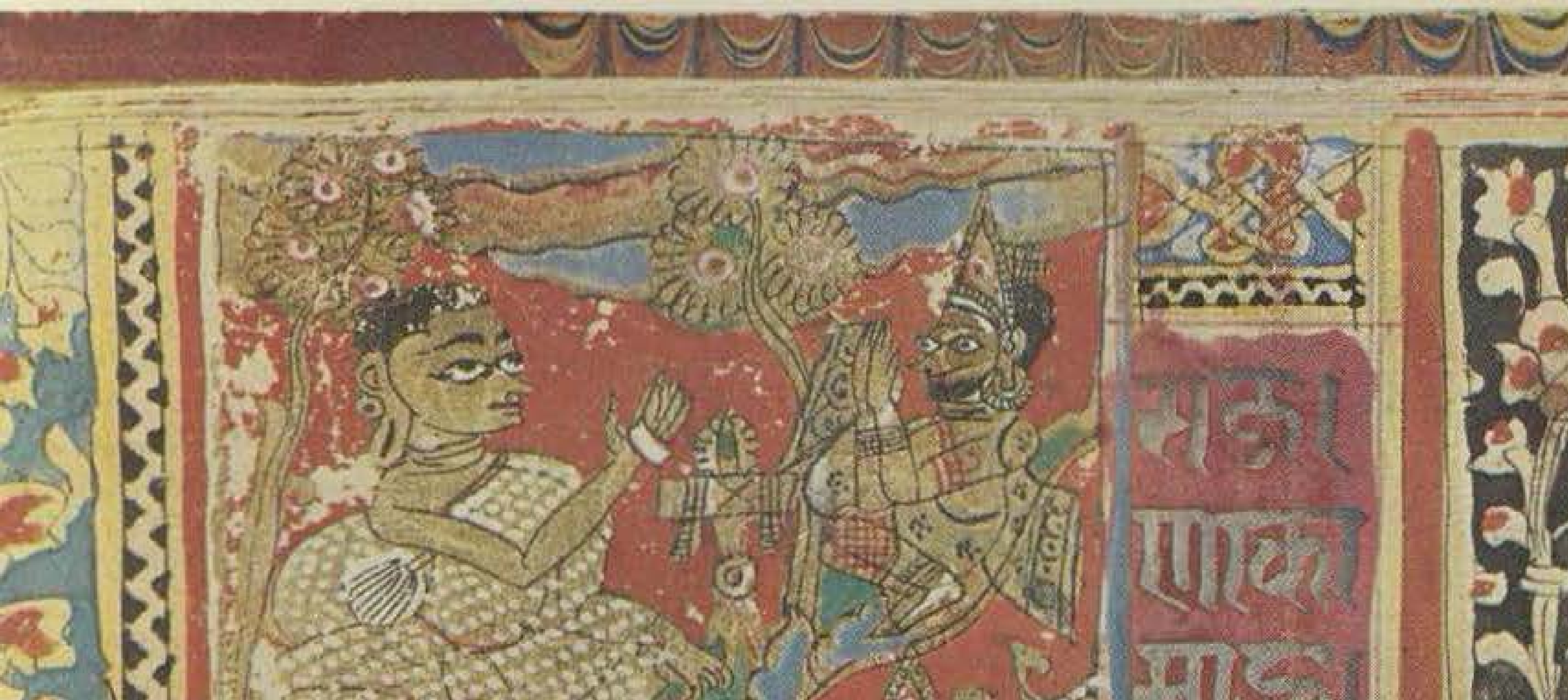


6. Kālaka conversing with King Śaka, seated on his throne. Jain art, 1428. Sans. Coll. 3177, India Office Library, London.

5. Kālaka converting King Śaka (above); Balamitra and his wife (below). Jain art, *c.* 1400. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. Two miniatures illustrating one of the first paper manuscripts and combining the *Kalpasūtra* (life of the Mahāvīra) with the story of Kālaka (*Kālakācāryakathānaka*).

6. Kālaka conversing with King Śaka, seated on his throne. Jain art, 1428. Sans. Coll. 3177, India Office Library, London. Miniature on folio 115 of the *Kālakācāryakathānaka*. The composition, which uses geometric and architectural motifs for the surroundings, is inversely proportional in symbolic value to the miniature on folio 129. The king, who has not yet fallen under Kālaka's sway, dominates the composition.

7. Kālaka instructing the Shāhi (sovereign) Śaka (Scythian) and his suite. Jain art, 1428. Sans. Coll. 3177, India Office Library, London. Miniature on folio 129 of the *Kālakācārya-kathānaka*. Note the proportional symbolism by which Kālaka's stature is increased to clearly indicate his moral superiority. A great deal of relief effect is apparent in the treatment of Śaka's arms and horses.



7. Kālaka instructing the Shāhi (sovereign)

India came into direct and violent contact with the civilisation of Islam. The use of paper, mostly imported from Persia but also from China across central Asia, facilitated the diffusion of this generally profane art, which reached its highest peak of splendour during the Mogul empire between the 16th and 18th centuries. Indian miniature painting was also subjected to a strong initial Persian influence, but it was short-lived since Indian artists soon recovered their own independence and originality. Artists combined local and Persian elements with others from Europe, which were less organic and generally incidental but which had far-reaching effects and consequences. With the Mogul empire, Indian painting began a new phase in its evolution. Ancient and medieval traditions gradually disappeared and gave way to modern characteristics. Indian art in its various aspects awoke from its centuries-long lethargy and began a glorious renaissance to which the most vital contribution was made by the studios established at the imperial court—studios which could also be organised into schools. It was from there that illustrated manuscripts, album miniatures, portraits, celebratory or genre scenes and various other paintings made their way all over India. The example set by the emperors was followed by courtiers and vassals who established flourishing workshops and schools at the courts of the local Raja; and the vogue for miniature painting spread from the capital cities into the minor centres and into the provinces, where it

always kept its predominantly worldly, and of course secular, character intact.

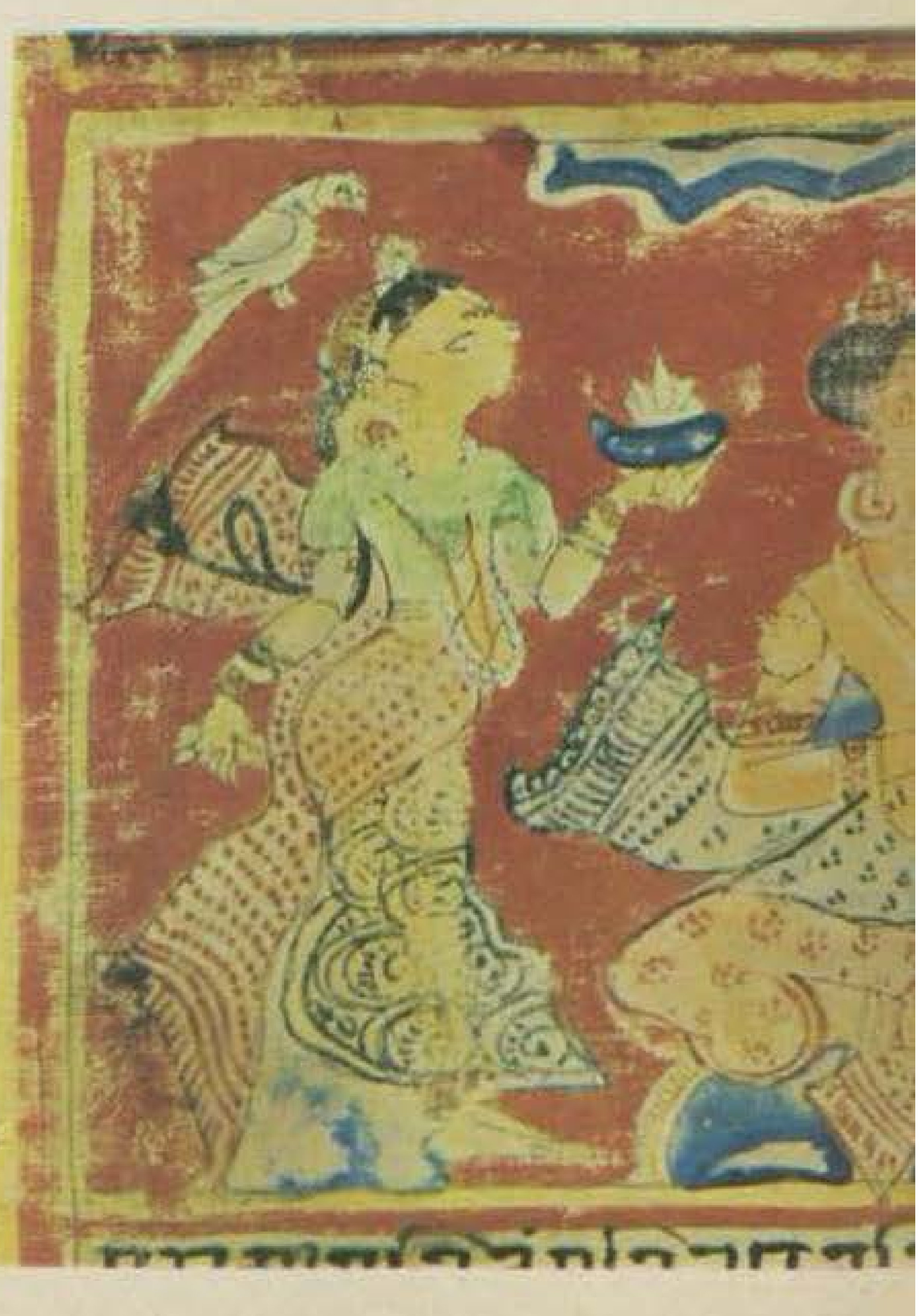
But before attaining this splendid phase, which was at the same time one of a political, religious, spiritual and social evolution, miniature art underwent a long preparatory period. This period has been widely documented and is characterised by various recurring technical and stylistic phenomena which have to be taken into account in any study of surviving works. The most ancient miniatures belong to a school, or rather to an artistic current, which was predominantly Buddhist and was usually named Pāla after the name of a north-east Indian dynasty which largely favoured the Buddhist creed in its mystic-magical form of the 'Adamantine Vehicle'.

As the technical term for the main currents in the Buddhist creed is 'Vehicles', meaning that they are all different ways of travelling along the spiritual path leading to 'Illumination' and, therefore, 'Salvation', it should be remembered that the diamond vehicle (the *Vajrayana*), the supreme way to attaining truth, largely made use of magical formulas evocative of the cosmic Buddha and the various figures in the Buddhist pantheon who assembled in themselves all the invisible forces at work around us. The *mantra* (magical formulas) and the *dhāranī* (magical formulas and syllables which serve for support in mystical experience) that were inserted into texts had their visual counterparts in the *yantra* (graphic symbols) and, naturally, in the miniature images charged with

8. Trisalā with the Mahāvīra (founder of Jainism). Jain art. Sans. Coll. 3177, India Office Library, London.



9. Group of people. School of Gujarāt, 1451. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.







8. Triśalā with the Mahāvīra (founder of Jainism). Jain art. Sans. Coll. 3177, India Office Library, London. Miniature on folio 76 of the *Kalpasūtra*. The Mahāvīra, wearing regal vestments since he is still a prince, is approached by Triśalā carrying a feather fan. In its very simplicity the composition is extraordinarily harmonious.

9. Group of people. School of Gujarāt, 1451. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature on cloth from the *Vasanta Vilāsa*, an erotic poem written on a scroll. Even this composition is highly stylised in the representation of the main figures and minor details, but it is still a strikingly decorative work. The Indian element is more apparent than in the preceding miniature.

10. Fantastic landscape. School of Gujarāt, 1451. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature on cloth from the *Vasanta Vilāsa*. The very marked stylised treatment of the mountains, which resemble flames, in contrast to the treatment of the trees and animals should be noted. The lion chasing the gazelles is Persian in type and could be a repetition of an archaic, stylised type dating from two thousand years earlier and which had survived through the centuries, even appearing in Moslem ceramics.



10. Fantastic landscape. School of Gujarāt, 1451.

attributes and symbols which had been originated to facilitate the task of the person pronouncing the formulas. The miniature image, executed in perfect conformity to the rules of iconography laid down for each divinity, provided a valuable starting point for anyone reciting the *mantra* and trying to evoke the same divinity of his own spirit. This was why some *tantra* (the works of the *Vajrayana* which were intended to lead the faithful to full 'Illumination' in this life and give them health, wealth and power) contain splendid miniatures which, to some extent, reflect the series of stylistic problems and their respective solutions of some mural paintings or sculptures of the mature period of Buddhist art under the Pāla. Some of these miniatures may be directly related to the decadent phase of the Pāla, or to the later period. What is certain is that they faithfully reflect the style of this dynasty, which took Indian Buddhist art to unsurpassed heights as it developed the stylistic premises of the preceding phase (that of the Gupta empire) which is usually defined as 'classical' because of the balance and harmony of its works.

The miniatures reflected the diffusion of the cults of Prajñāpāramitā, Tārā, Mañjuśri and many other Buddhist divinities, thereby echoing the profound transformation which had affected religious thought some time earlier. Consequently Prajñāpāramitā, literally meaning 'knowledge which has gone beyond', was the symbol for esoteric knowledge personified in a female form regarded as the mother

of all the Buddhas. The word 'beyond', which occurs in its name, signified an indefinite and indefinable dimension in which every single individuality disappears, being absorbed into the life of the Universe itself in which all the anxieties, anguish and torments of human condition also fade away. We may therefore give it the name of 'transcendental knowledge' or—even better—*sophia,* using the Greek word in the mystico-religious sense given to it by the great exponents of Gnostic thought like Basileus, Martius and Valentinus, although in practice the concept was transformed by the Indians into a protective divinity.

On the other hand Tārā was a popular creation which may have been derived from the two wives, one Chinese and the other Nepalese, of a 7th-century Tibetan king, who represented two complementary but opposite poles of that femininity which could help men attain the 'Absolute' in various ways and lose themselves in the indefinable dimension just mentioned. We do know that the idea personified by Tārā in its double form (green and white Tārā) was somewhat anterior in date to the historical characters who incarnated it and determined its diffusion and popularity, especially as, quite apart from this semi-historic detail which could be omitted by Buddhists, the name Tārā was derived from Tārājati, the 'feminine saviour' which animated men and conditioned their life in every sense. Mañjuśri may also have been incarnated in an historical character (possibly a

Chinese prince who lived in the 1st century AD on the cliffs of the 'mountain of five peaks') and represented intuitive knowledge and inner wisdom. Together with other Bodhisattvas and a few of the supreme Buddhas, these symbolic divinities, who were charged with esoteric and popular meanings, continuously recur in manuscript illustrations. But the modern critic must not only examine the whole corpus of symbols which clarify the meaning of the image, but must also pay great attention to their technique and formal execution.

Apart from the obvious aesthetic quality of many of the images and their increasingly obvious stress on the Indian canon of female beauty, it should be noted that the images themselves, which are drawn in red and white, are formed by colour planes. The artists, who often strove after plastic effects and the illusion of relief, nearly always derived their inspiration from the metal statues of the period. They were trying to translate into pictorial terms the idealised volumes of the cult-images which, in this period, were mostly made by the artisans' guilds concentrated around the famous monastic university of Nālandā, one of the greatest ever established by the Buddhist community. It was at Nālandā that miniatures were painted and copied for the countless religious texts used in the propagation of Buddhist thought. They also represented an act of faith and a means for 'acquiring merit' since by the act of executing and commissioning them both artists and patrons were

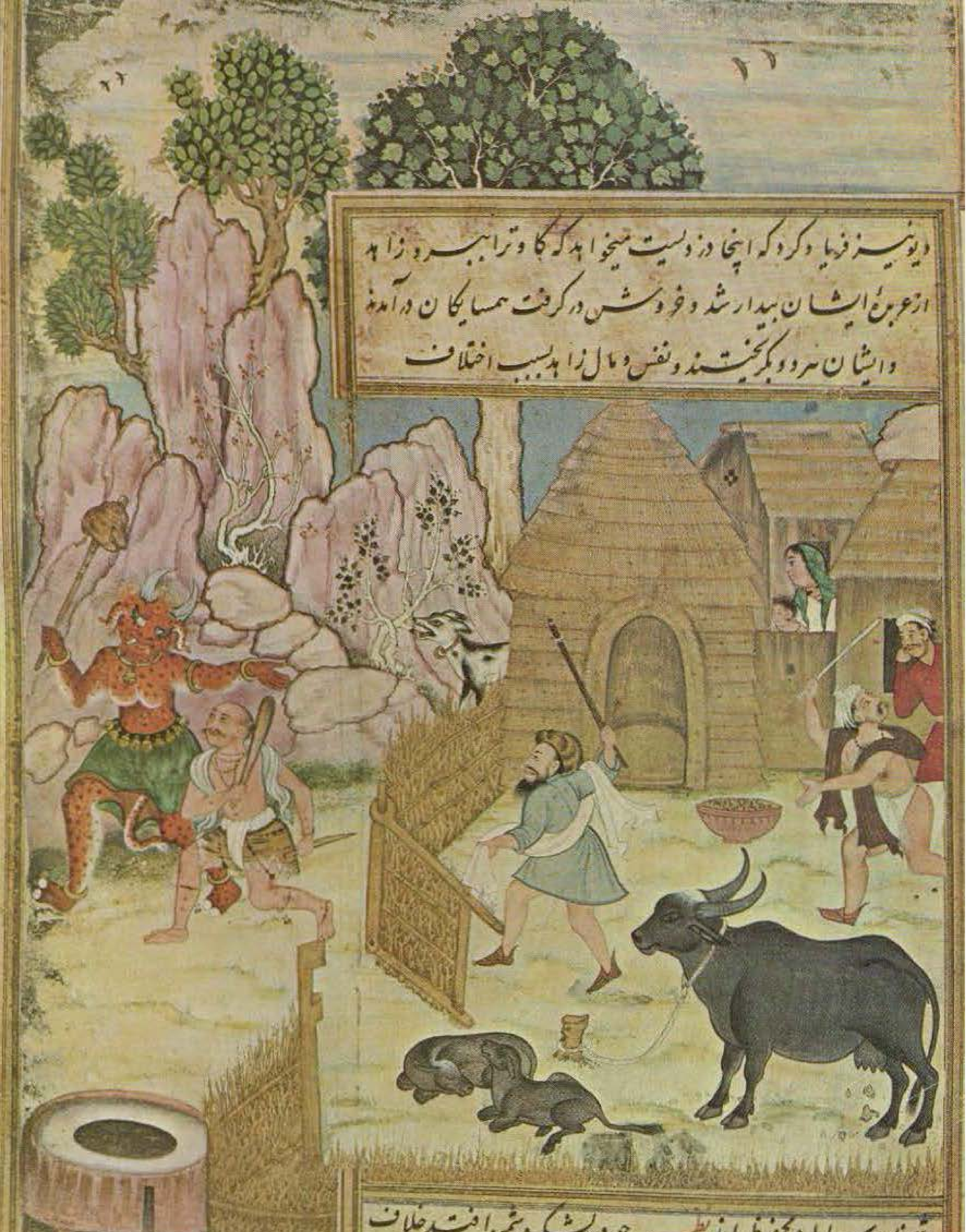
progressing towards final liberation from the intolerable burden of constant reincarnation.

In many ways the miniatures were painted in accordance with the technique of large mural paintings, the rules laid down in texts, and the rule of proportions which were regulated by a precise system of measurement, its basis or parameter being the head of the figure measured from the top of the skull to the point of the chin. When the human figure was not represented in its frontal aspect, in symmetrical and strictly balanced compositions, a peculiar kind of foreshortening effect called *kshayavriddhi* ('enlargement and diminution'—a reference to the apparent change in proportions determined by distance and movement) in the texts, is very noticeable. In part, at least, this was due more to the study of sculptures, which the painters used as highly sophisticated models, than to any direct observation of reality.

Even the use and value of drawings were the same as those prescribed by treatises on mural painting, although the materials used were quite different. The text-books declared that the drawing itself (*lekha*) should be composed of harmonious, sinuous and clear-cut lines to delimit forms. The entire composition was intended to make the spectator see the image in fragments and form a kind of psychological perspective in which the principal divinity appeared in the foreground while the minor divinities, various symbolic details and figures of donors and worshippers, receded into the background.



11. The prophet Elias saving the prince Nur ad-Dar from the river. Mogul art, *c.* 1564. British Museum, London.

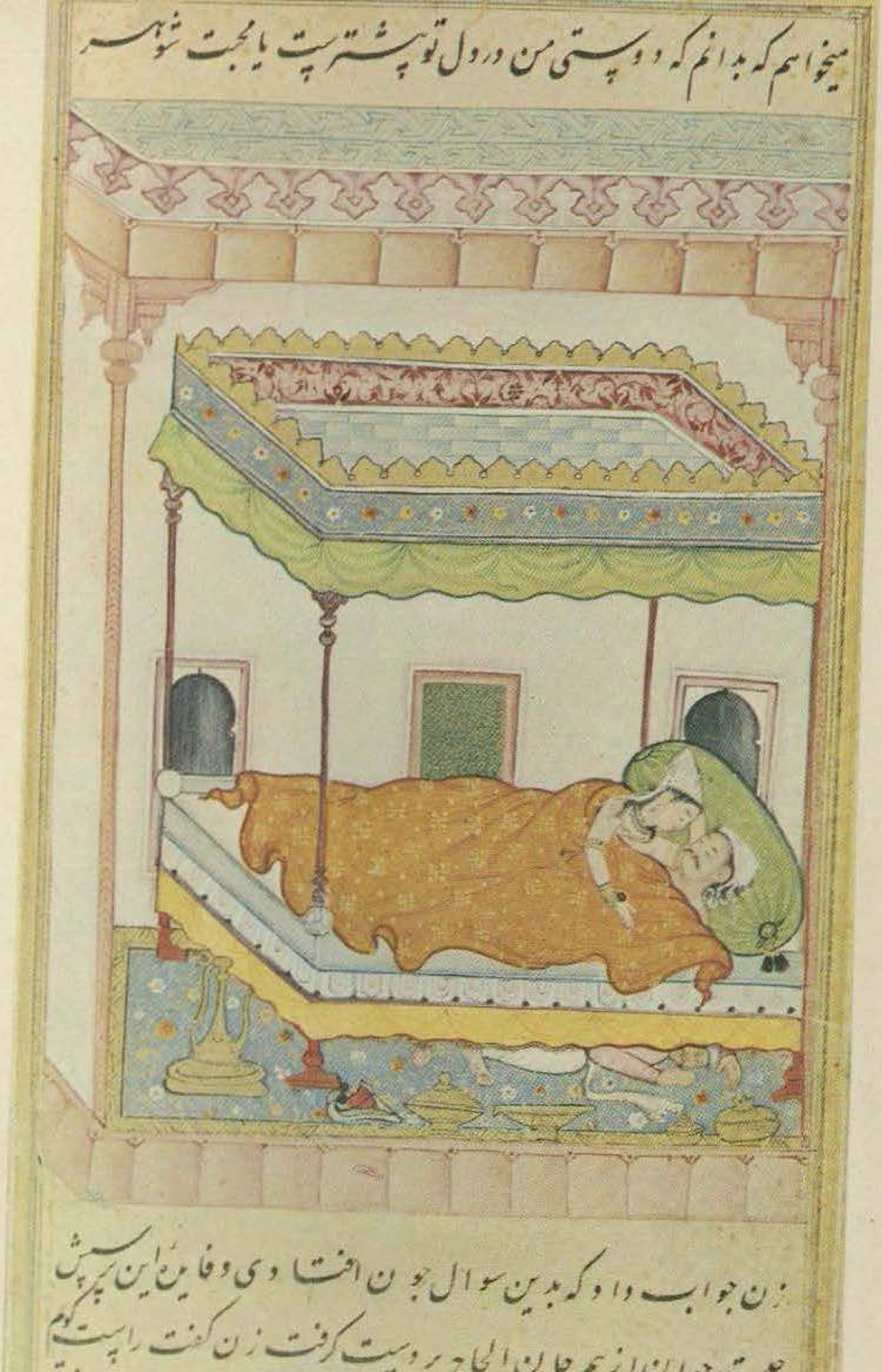


12. Attack on a village. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

11. The prophet Elias saving the prince Nur ad-Dar from the river. Mogul art, *c.* 1564. British Museum, London. Miniature illustrating an episode of the *Amīr Hamzah,* dating from the middle period of the reign of Akbar. The swirling waters, the large fish, the monsters emerging from the river and the fantastic, dreamlike landscape, form a backdrop for the prophet as he miraculously walks on the water to pull the prince to safety.

12. Attack on a village. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Miniature from the *Anwar-i-Suhaylī.* Inside the village some men prepare its defence against the threatening enemy who are aided by a monstrous demon. The agitation of the villagers is vigorously depicted. As always, great care has been lavished on the trees and animals.

13. The eternal triangle. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Miniature from the *Anwar-i-Suhaylī.* The style is simple and schematic, the ridiculous and near-caricatural aspect of the situation being stressed. The miniature was painted by a different artist.



13. The eternal triangle. Mogul art, 1570.

Although there was still a perceptible and effective link with large-scale mural painting (especially as far as composition went), as codified and industrialised by technical treatises, it was very soon broken, with miniature painting acquiring its independence and the freedom to follow new paths of its own.

The Buddhist miniatures of the 10th and 11th centuries stood half way between the illusive richness, delicate harmony and brilliance of the Ajanta paintings and the almost hieratic schematisation of contemporary or later Jain paintings, which were influenced to some degree by the schools of the Indo-Iranian mainstream of art. Jain miniatures of the same or later period were in a completely different style. A complicated process of transformation, due to changes in taste and fashion and the requirements of the Jain religion, resulted in a deeply-felt intolerance of plastic modelling.

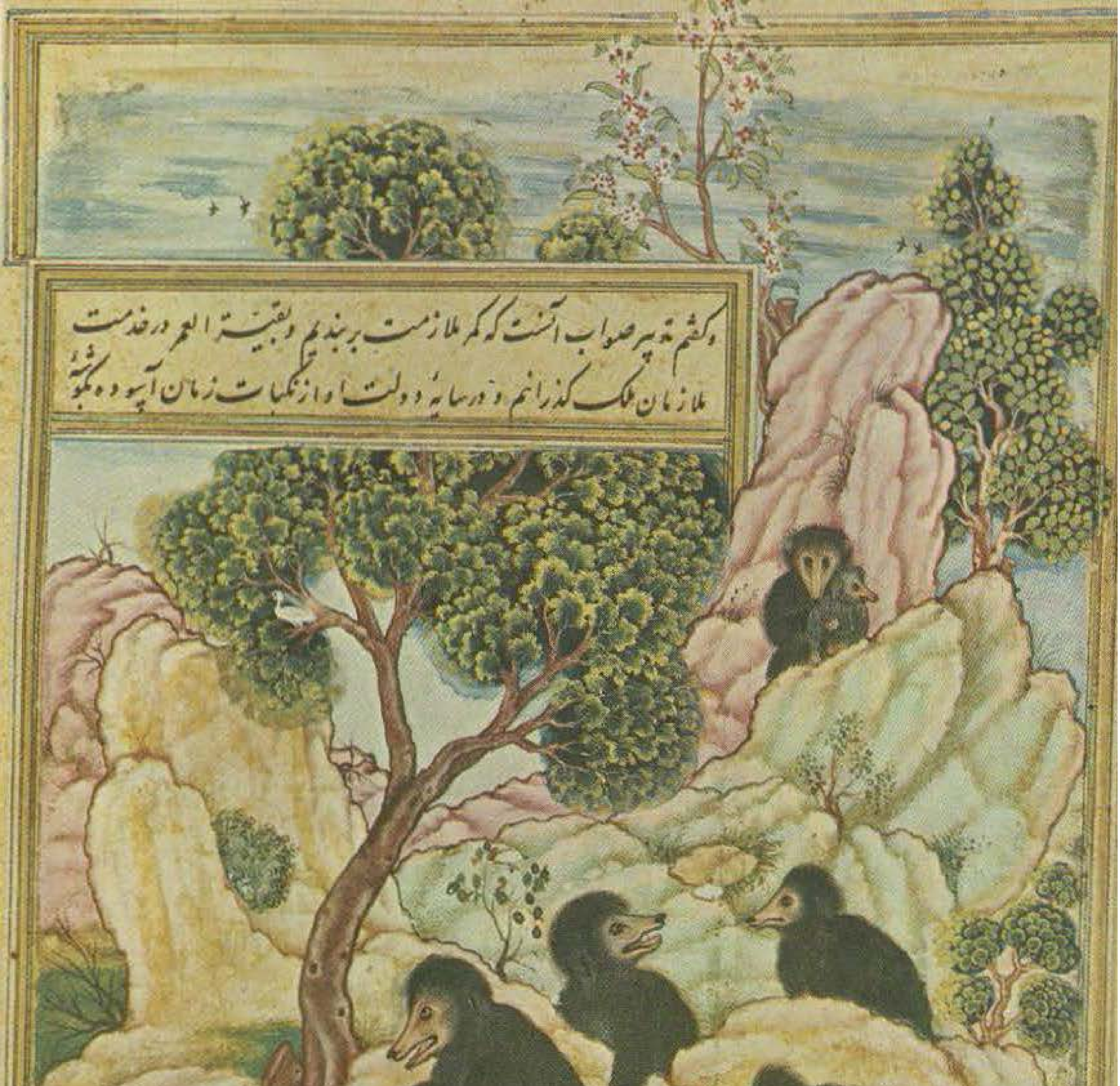
Images became 'animated', to use a cinematic term, by means of a systematic expression of movement which favoured flat, two-dimensional composition. They renounced any kind of illusive artifice in favour of conventional representations of perspective and movement. The new manner was more than a process of stylisation and two-dimensional representation: it was the result of the greater importance given to linear composition which became tense, angular and more clear-cut but less harmonious. We may say that as they mastered the technique of sketching even complex images with

one single, unbroken line, the miniaturists went on to execute works in which the static and relaxed aspects of the human figure were predominant. Movement which, as the texts stated 'altered the lines of contour', was no longer fashionable. Following the rules already embodied in the ancient treatises like the *Vishnudharmottara,* artists now tried to represent the human figure in the most easily and clearly visible manner.

Once it had become the rule, this principle led artists to decompose the human figure into different elements, each treated in such a way as to display it with maximum clarity. As a result, what had once been a three-quarter profile now became a conventional schema in which the second, less visible eye was made to project from the face on to the flat, coloured background, while the other, which was shown frontally, was joined to the ear by a straight line which started from the outer corner (or 'tail') of the eye. The loss of the three-dimensional illusion, the archaic aspects of the pictorial treatment resulting from the desire to obtain maximum possible visibility, and the fact that the images seemed to be composed of separate sections and to be rigid, as though crystallised, in attitudes that only sometimes suggest the idea of movement—slow and never convincing—were all signs of the new way in which painters were looking at reality. The colour tones, still warm yet muted, with the exception of the azure blue in mural paintings of the classic period and the



14. Monkeys playing. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London.



15. Kashmir bears with a monkey. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

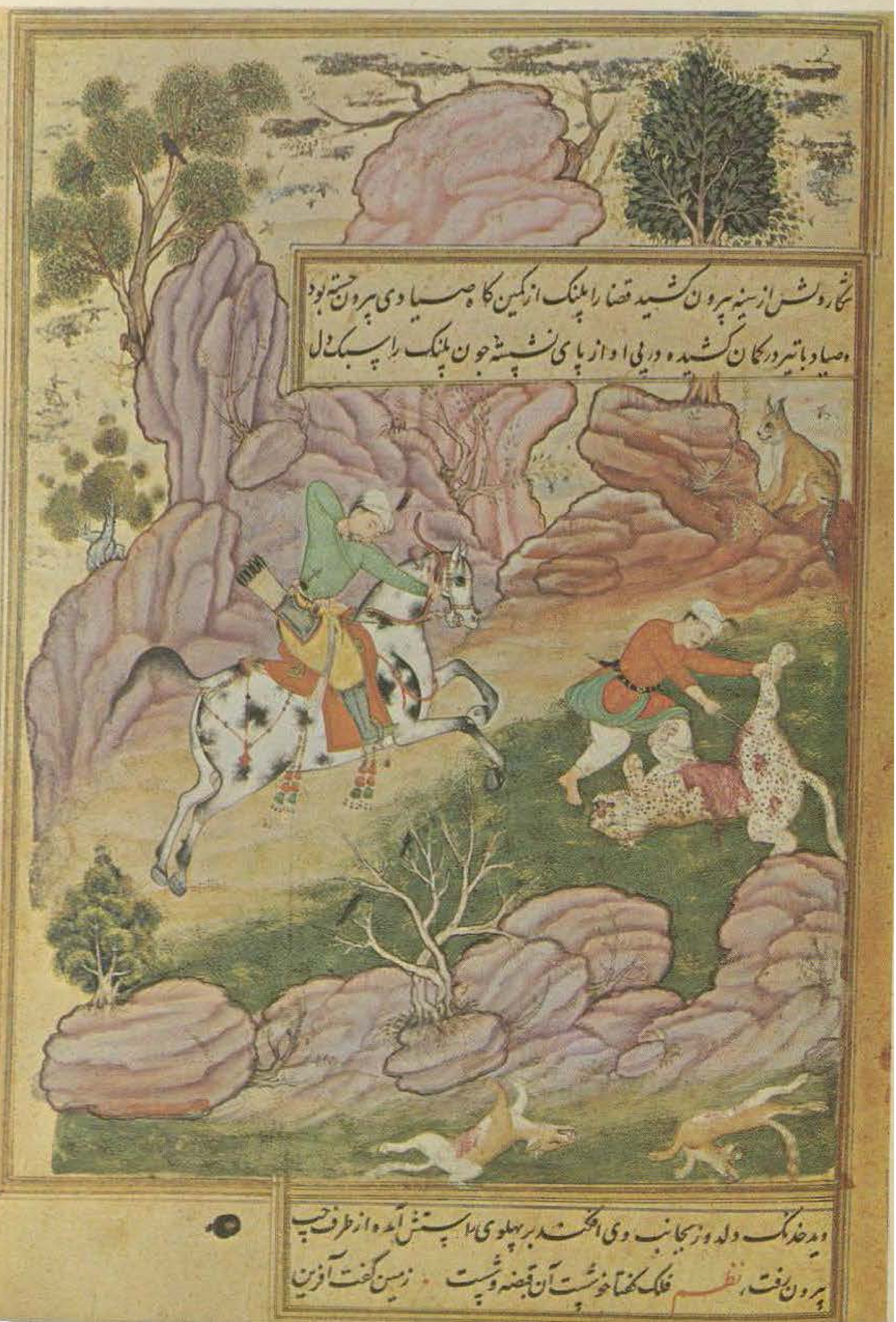
14. Monkeys playing. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Miniature page from the *Anwar-i-Suhaylī*. The work, which is in Persian, contains animal fables. It may have been inspired by an ancient collection of Indian fables attributed to the legendary Bidpai. The rocky landscape is Persian in style but the monkeys and trees are Indian in their realism. Some of the monkeys are making almost human gestures.

15. Kashmir bears with a monkey. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Miniature page from the *Anwar-i-Suhaylī*. Against a rocky background dominated by a tree, rendered in the naturalistic manner of Indian art, the ungainly shapes of the bears are in contrast with that of the precisely drawn monkey. The sky with birds in flight is clearly European in inspiration.

16. Hunting scene. Mogul art, 1570. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Miniature page from the *Anwar-i-Suhaylī*. The hunting scene with dead animals and a servant skinning a panther, dominated by the figure of the prince on horseback, is framed by a markedly Persian landscape. The beautiful lynxes and the dead animals clearly show Indian inspiration.

17. Encounter between the hostile but related Panduidi and Kuruidi families. Provincial Mogul art. British Museum, London. Miniature from a dispersed manuscript of the *Razm Nāmeh*, a Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata* commissioned by Akbar. All that is known of the illustrators is that they were called Abdullah and Fazol.

16. Hunting scene. Mogul art, 1570.



17. Encounter between the hostile but related Panduidi and Kuruidi families. Provincial Mogul art. British Museum, London.



bright reds in the Buddhist manuscript miniatures, also became modified. Flat but highly coloured, luminous backgrounds were planes of colour against which thick, decisively drawn contour shapes stood out as patches of bold colour in violent contrast with the background in a kind of *intarsio* effect. This was a new style which had been originated in illustrated manuscripts written on palm-leaves. In its effect it was extremely calligraphic, as though to harmonise the compositions with the heavy script, and though poor in technical resources it was rich in expressive possibilities.

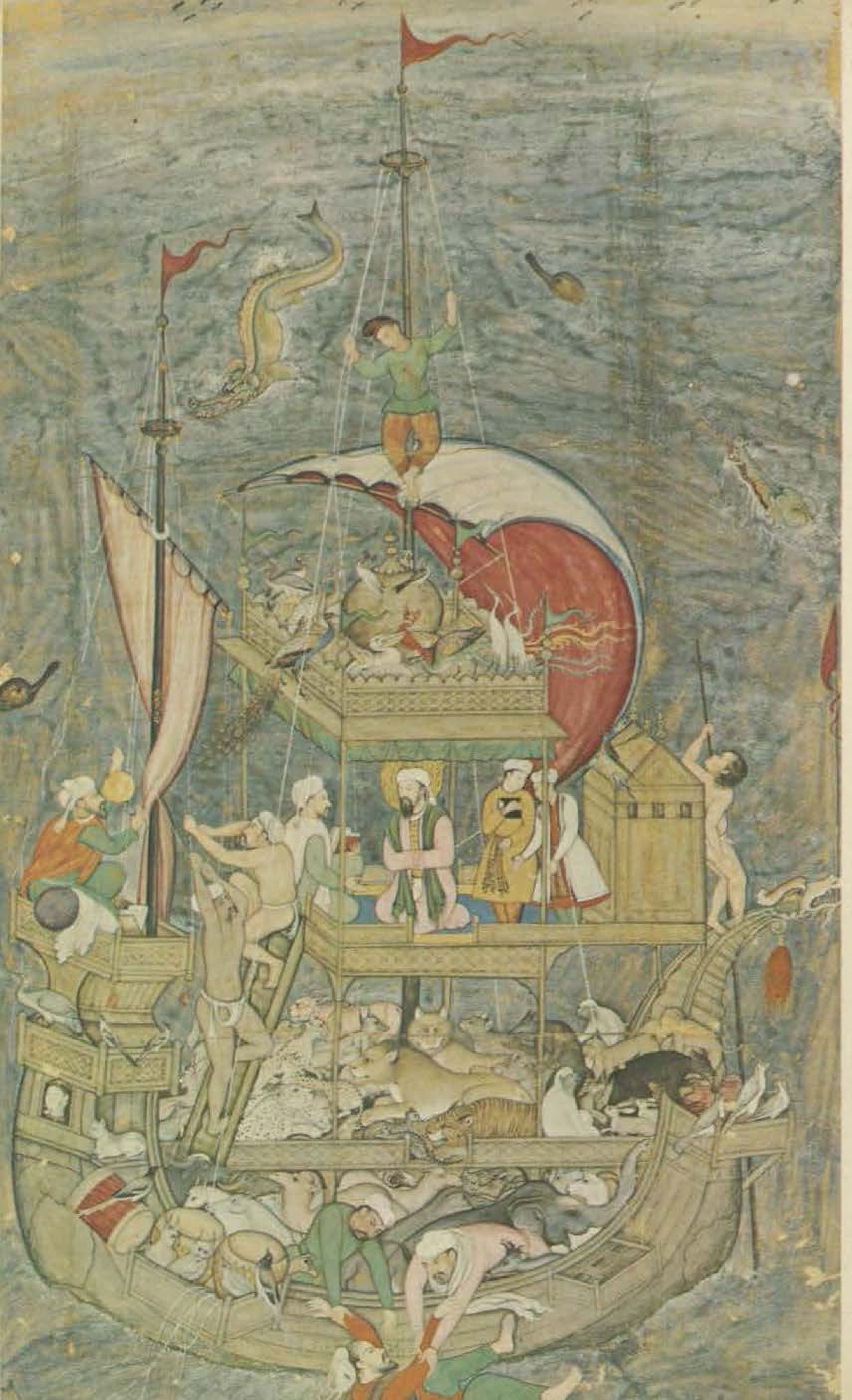
In a certain sense it was a new and almost revolutionary style which took pictorial art a decisive step further. But it left important traces even in the stylisation of plastic images which had forms, styles and conventions that would have been inconceivable had it not been for this new development. Even so, despite the profound changes mentioned, the human figure kept indelible traces of its ancient beauty even in the Jain miniatures. The male figure was still represented with the harmonious proportions of the so-called 'leonine build', while women retained their slim waists and the exotic opulence of swelling breasts while the perfect arc of their wide hips was stressed. Stylisation, particularly evident in the few frontal images with eyes set near the bridge of the nose in an exaggerated and almost caricatural manner, did not entirely destroy the remote roots from which the vigorous new style had sprung. It was essentially

the result of a reaction against the interest in the overall effect of every figure—apart from any anatomical peculiarities it might have—which had been characteristic of all the art of ancient India. Jain miniaturists often used images for narrative purposes, to describe the life and episodes in the lives of the 'conquerors' of men's souls, such as the heroes and masters of Jain thought—especially the Mahāvīra who was the last master of the religion and the only truly historical figure. Design, perspective and composition were all made subservient to an ornamental sense which exploited flat surfaces that had been modified in structure, perspective and movement, and by the desire to flatten every suggestion of relief, to transform them into complex and sometimes heavy arabesques. Artists used the limited space available to them to compose as many figures and details as possible in scenes which had narrative significance but which were essentially patches of colour, all clearly delimited by geometric contour lines.

Above all it was textiles, jewels, crowns and the constantly reduced elements of landscape (slender trees, mountains and clouds) which gave the Jain painters pretexts to experiment in a complex stylisation that paved the way for forms which were almost abstract and which, even recently, appealed to the eclectic tastes of some European illustrators.

The experiments of the Jain miniaturists were not without influence on Indian art after the 11th century,

and the striving to show the spectator as much as possible in a picture led to the great popularity and prevalence of profile portraiture which was a characteristic of both Rajput and Mogul miniature painting. The strong stylisation of the profile itself might have had precedents in medieval Hindu sculpture and in the mural paintings of some temples, but there is no doubt that it became widespread as a result of the interest aroused by Jain miniatures, themselves the expression of a coherent and easily identifiable taste. The very fact that Jain painters had preferred three-quarter profiles, perspectively displacing one of the eyes to avoid the foreshortening effect which true perspective would have given, was an obvious symptom of the existence of this taste. In part it was born out of the very nature of the Jain religion, whose followers were mostly bankers and goldsmiths or those whose work absolutely excluded the possibility of showing contempt for even the humblest form of animal life. The high social level of the Jain implied a refined education which gave artists a greater degree of liberty and, what was especially important, the security of knowing that their work would be appreciated and understood. On the other hand, even for the Jain artists the inspiration which gave birth to a work of art was held to come from evocative meditation (*dhyāna*) while the second phase of creation, the actual execution of the work, came to be considered as subordinate and even servile to the first phase, merely consisting of

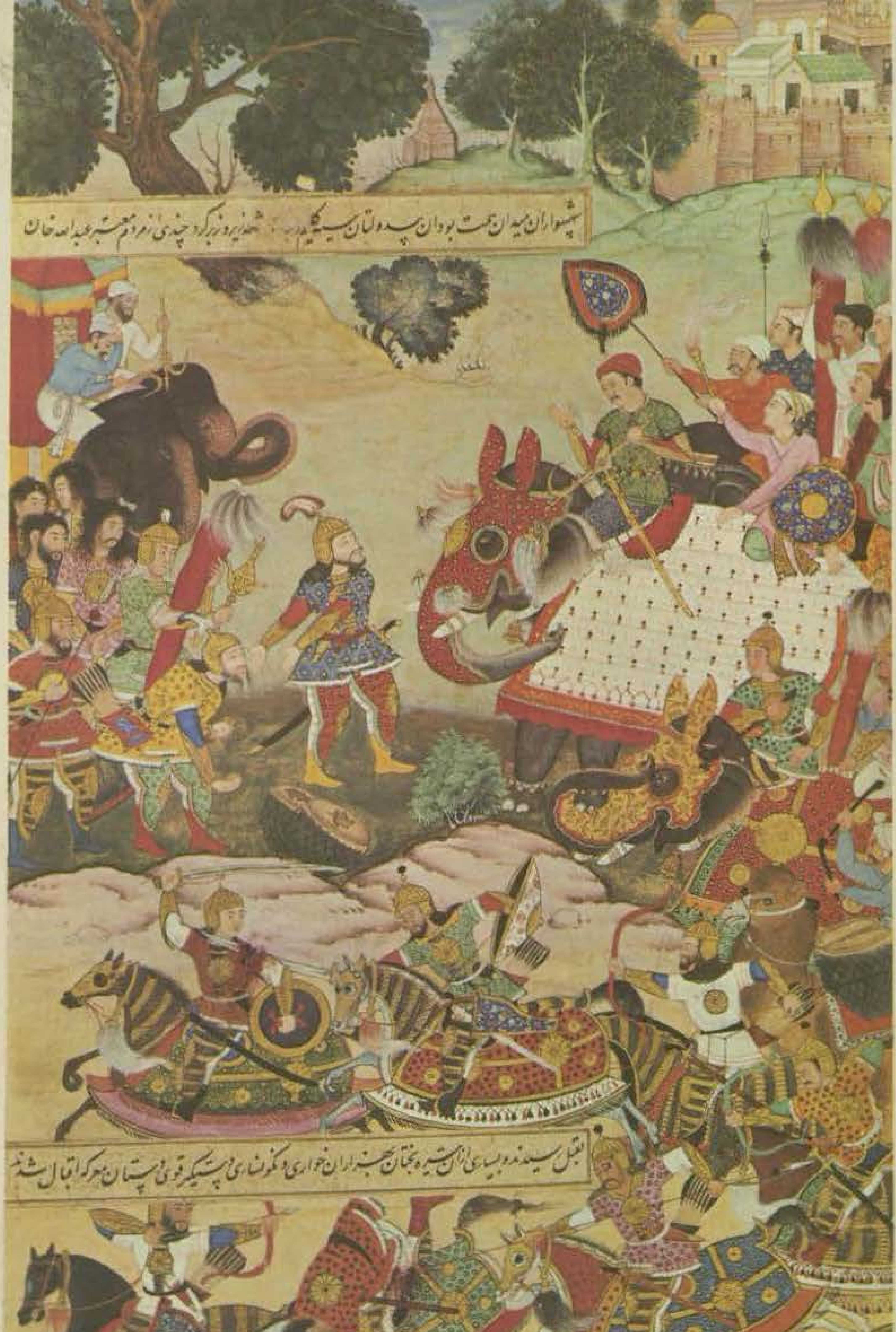


18. Scene derived from the story of Noah's Ark. Mogul art, 16th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature of the time of Akbar, in gold and colours. The great ship carrying various species of animals is rendered with European perspective, like the billowing sail. The movement of the figures, especially the three in the foreground, is vigorously rendered.

19. Battle scene: Akbar on an armoured elephant, leading his troops. Mogul art, *c.* 1600. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Miniature from the *Akbar Nāma* by Abū'l Fazl. Stylistically, the work shows the Persian element dominating in the fighting in the foreground and progressively weakening in the background towards the great tree and fortified city.

20. Battle scene. Mogul art, *c.* 1600. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Miniature from the *Akbar Nāma* by Abū'l Fazl. The spirit of this strongly realistic work is obviously narrative and almost journalistic despite hints of the Persian style.

18. Scene derived from the story of Noah's Ark. Mogul art, 16th century.



19. Battle scene: Akbar on an armoured elephant, leading his troops. Mogul art, *c.* 1600. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

20. Battle scene. Mogul art, *c.* 1600. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



imitating what the eye or the mind had seen with mirror-like fidelity.

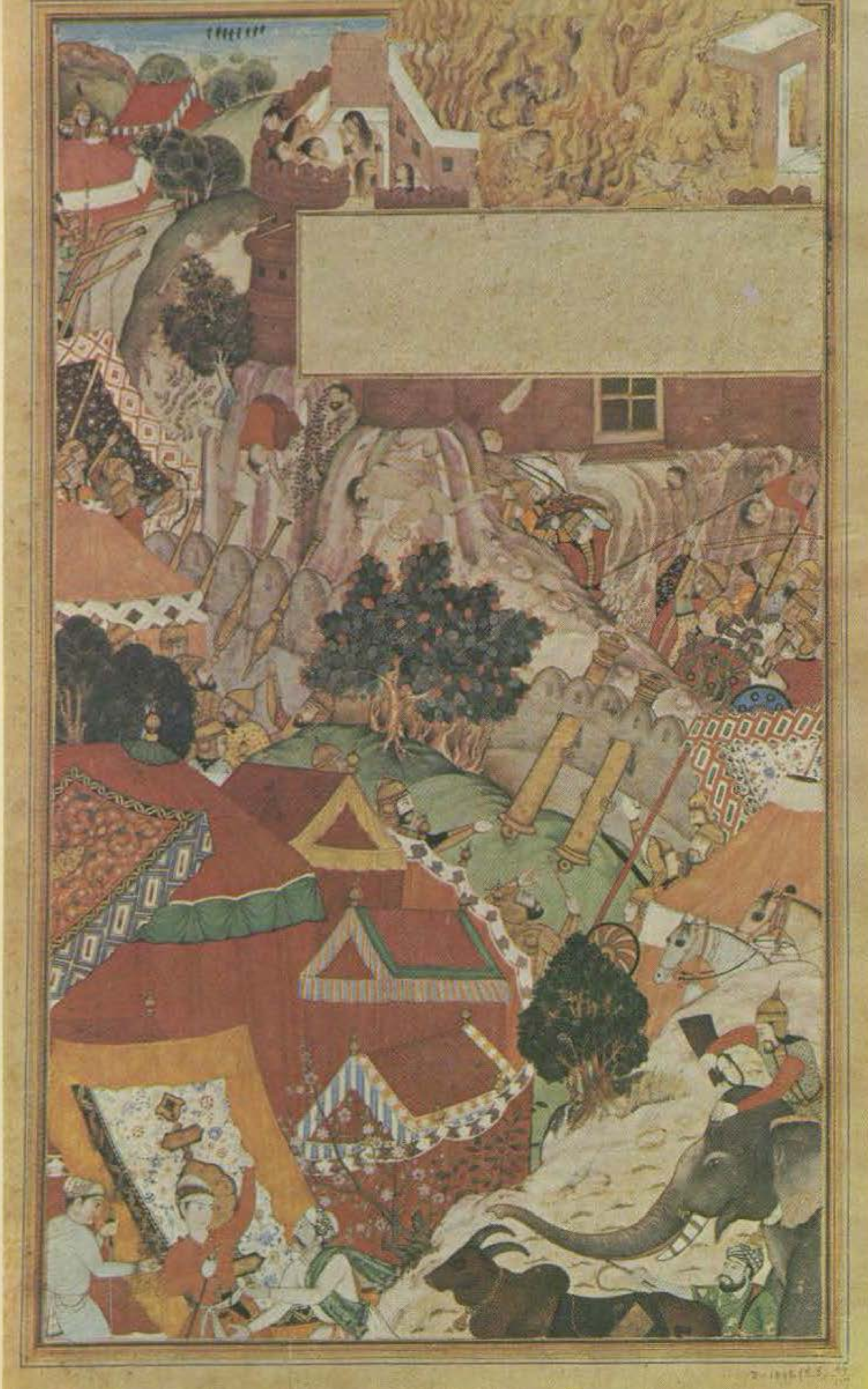
It was this same process, reflecting the elaborate and complex spirituality of Jainism, which, like Buddhism, was basically a current of almost heretical thought in the mainstream of traditional Indian religious belief. It was a creed inspired by compassion rather than charity, and it was made into a rigid system with a corpus of norms and doctrines which were clearly reflected in the activities and social conditions of its followers. It is very tempting to consider the figurative process of decomposition of the human figure in miniature painting to be a consequence of the atomistic conception of matter that was peculiar to Jain thought, especially as atoms were believed to be grouped together in composites (*skandha*) from which aggregates or bodies (*kāya*) were derived. But even though there might have been some tendency to decompose and fragment matter, it would not be wise to evolve a theory on the basis of what is only a vague possibility. Nonetheless the fact remains that, according to Jain thought, every living being—even a plant—was endowed with a soul (*jīva*) which was burdened by matter but still potentially perfect and omniscient, and provided with unlimited powers. In such a vision of the world, men, animals and plants were all set on the same level and therefore given equal importance as elements in a painting. It is this which explains the lack of interest in landscape and in inanimate objects not directly connected with the

human body in its individual life. Given such premises it was only logical that, as Indian art evolved, the Jain miniatures were to assume a role largely similar to that played in Western art by the stylised mosaic compositions of Byzantium and Ravenna, which were both the final product of the classical tradition and a reaction against it. But the style created by the Jain artists was not confined to religious subjects. Although it was capable of transforming something as straightforward as the narration of the life of the Mahāvīra (the founder of Jainism, divinised by his followers) into a clearly defined and precise theological doctrine, artists also tackled profane subjects.

The result was the birth of one of the major Indian schools of miniature painting, known as the school of Gujarāt, although the style spread elsewhere, especially in Rājasthān and Mālva. It largely flourished because it was patronised by the Cālukya kings who ruled Gujarāt from 961 until the end of the 13th century, and it showed its vitality by even influencing the erotic statuary of the temple of Konarak in Orissa, although the site was dedicated to Sūrya, the Sun. It also played a part in the origins of Rajput miniature painting which will be discussed later. Above all, it showed the measure of its vitality when India came into contact with Moslem invaders. Even after the Moslem conquest of the region, which was completed in 1299, bankers and merchants of the Jain faith continued to control the local economy so that latent fear of fiscal extortions and of persecution



21. Scene from the siege of Rantambhōr: heavy cannon being hauled into position. Mogul art, late 16th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



22. The 'Janhar'. Rajput ladies throw themselves into the flames during the siege of Chitor by Akbar. Mogul art, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

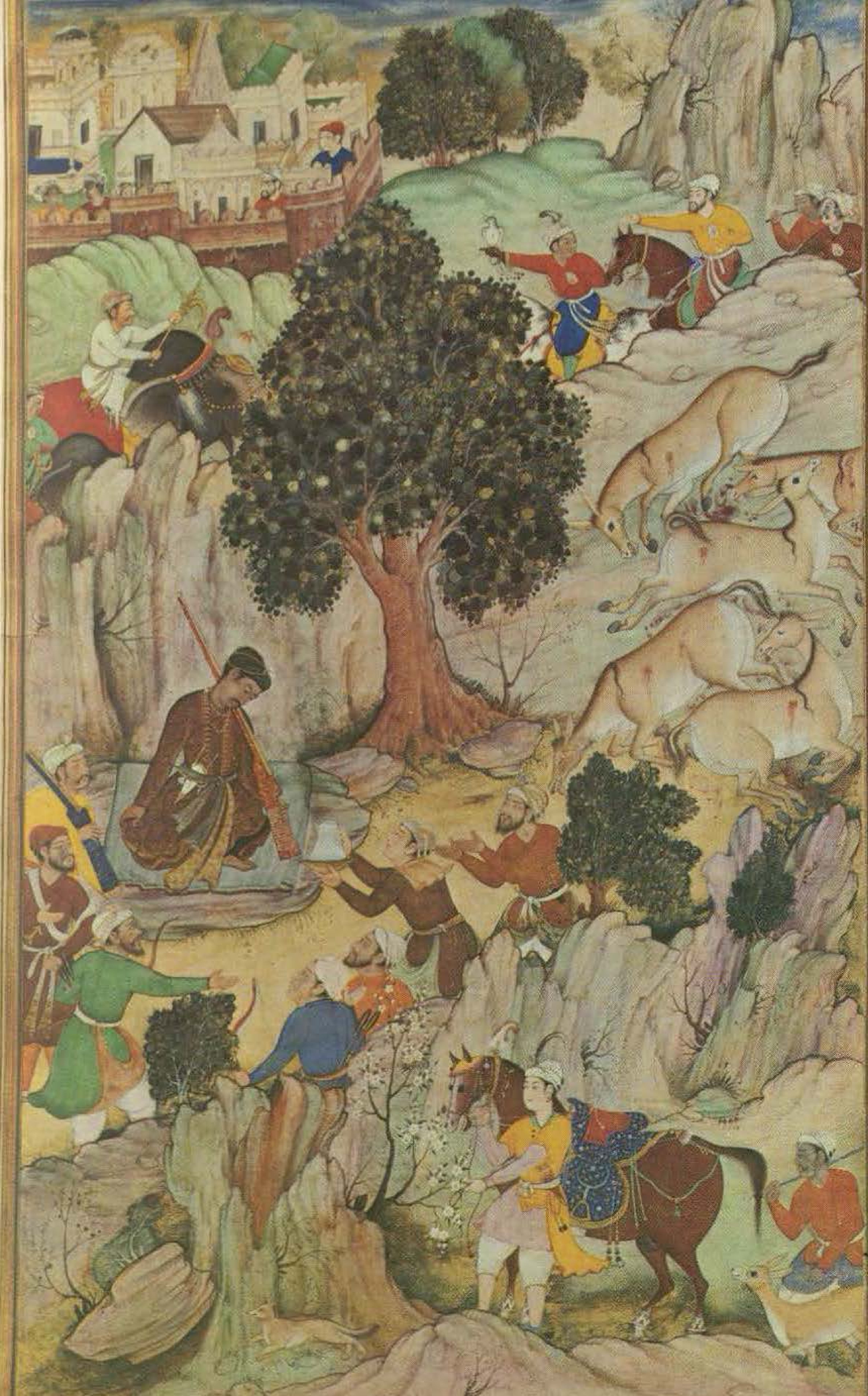
21. Scene from the siege of Rantambhōr: heavy cannon being hauled into position. Mogul art, late 16th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The episode dates from 1568 but the miniature painted by Mīskinā and Lal, the finest painters at the court of Akbar, dates from very much later. It belongs to the magnificently illustrated *Akbar Nāma*. The slanting composition with the foreshortening of the animals must certainly be the work of Mīskinā, unsurpassed as an animal painter.

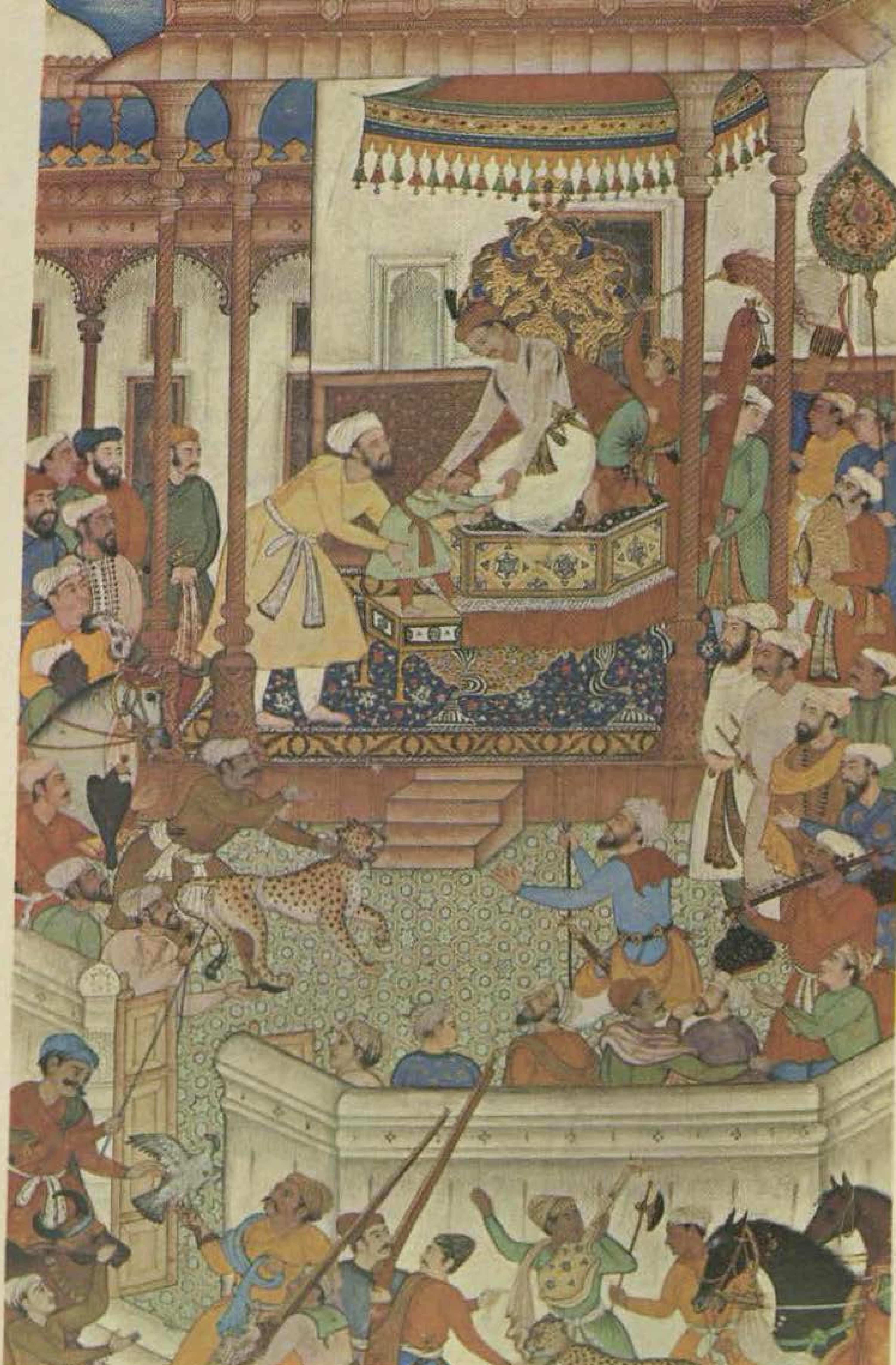
22. The 'Janhar'. Rajput ladies throw themselves into the flames during the siege of Chitor by Akbar. Mogul art, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The episode took place in 1567 but the miniature is much later. The many horrors of a pitiless war are strikingly represented by means of a complex and detailed composition.

23. Akbar found by his suite during a hunt near Multan after having been lost. Mogul art, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Miniature from the *Akbar Nāma*, painted by Mahish and Kisu. The composition, centred on the tree protecting the emperor, is a masterly and pleasing combination of diverse elements.

24. Akbar giving audience to Abd ur-Rahīm at Agra in 1562. Mogul art, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Akbar represented with courtiers and hunting equipment. Anant, the artist, was a mediocre painter in Akbar's school but here he has succeeded in creating a balanced and pleasing composition.

23. Akbar found by his suite during a hunt near Multan after having been lost.





24. Akbar giving audience to Abd ur-Rahim at Agra in 1562. Mogul art, early 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

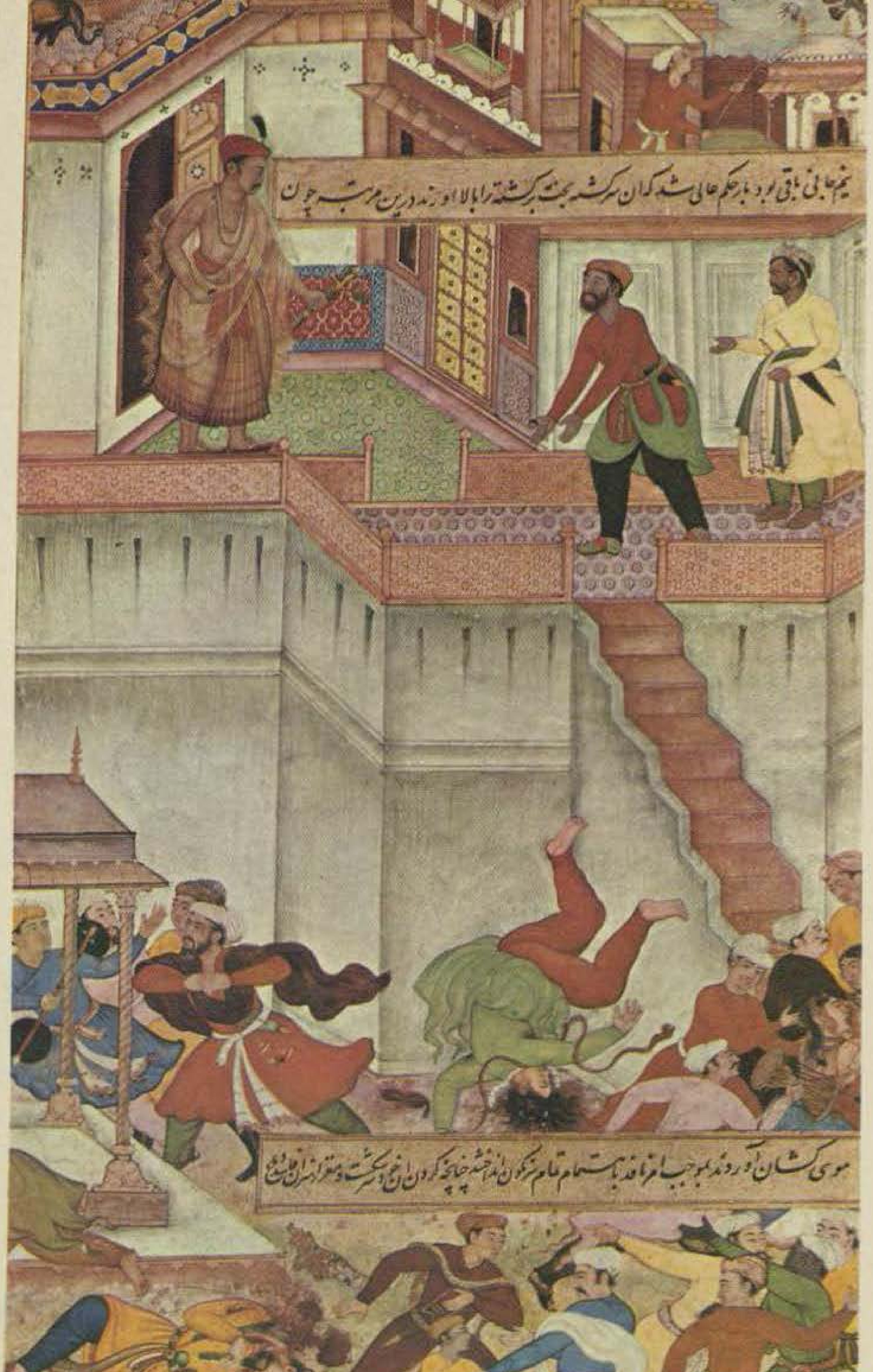
by the conquerors encouraged a more intensive production of precious objects that could be easily carried and hidden. But, quite apart from political and economic conditions, what was most striking was the evolutive coherence of the Gujarāt style. The only changes were in the transition from the red backgrounds of the earlier phase to blue and gold-powder backgrounds—a superficial sign of Persian influence. The style continued to resist change with equal vigour in the 16th century, despite the figurative richness of Mogul miniature painting which could neither supplant nor appreciably modify the surviving style of Gujarāt. Moreover, certain miniatures which illustrated the sumptuous copies of the *Kalpasūtra* (a text on the life of Mahāvīra and other Jain saints) or the *Kālakācāryakathānaka* (the adventurous story of the Jain monk Kālaka who vowed to recover his sister after she had been kidnapped by the king of Ujjain) sometimes displayed a highly individual illusive effect: the characters appeared to be emerging sideways out of the harmonious lines of the script into the 'pictorial zone' against the red background on the miniature page. The effect given was one of sideways motion which enlivened the composition in accordance with the artist's precise intentions. Such effects were alien to reality and more or less scientific perspective, but for all their curious nature they were still artistically valid.

The infinite series of variants which flourished like so many branches or extensions of the central

Gujarāt school was another proof of the style's vitality. In these variants the lines of the drawing might become denser but they also became more clear-cut and harmonious. The artists showed that they were becoming increasingly ambitious in the way they strove to convey the transparency of veils and the decoration of undergarments, and in the way they rendered minute details. At the same time figures became better spaced and clearer, so that the overall composition had a more relaxed and balanced tone. One critic has spoken of a greater adherence to reality in these paintings. Certain particulars, ranging from the elegance of forms in animal paintings to the loving care with which textiles and furnishings were represented, might be taken as confirmation of his opinion, although perspective continued to be rendered by means of superimposed planes, while images were fragmented and distorted according to the principle of maximum visibility, and the bias against three-dimensional effects persisted. Consequently to speak of an adherence to reality, unconventional though such an expression is, is always risky. The school evolved along the lines of a coherent and inflexible style that occasionally led to caricatural or grotesque results because of the premises underlying it. But this did not prevent some Indo-Islamic works, dating from shortly before the Mogul invasion, from showing the influence of the Gujarāt style, like some other works of the Mewar school whose form and content were more obviously Indian.

The Gujarāt school was completely successful in preparing the way for the transition from the mural painting of the so-called classic period to the painting of the following period, when the Moslem rulers invited Persian painters to make their courts, sumptuous and lavish as they had always been, into centres of art. Moreover, the way in which the Gujarāt painters prepared palm leaves for their miniatures was directly derived from mural painting techniques, and certain processes were still retained even though they were superfluous in miniature art. Once again, this was a sign of Indian traditionalism and of the link between Gujarāt miniature art and ancient painting which was to survive intact until the mid-17th century when the Gujarāt school had practically ceased to exist.

The Mogul empire, which was the third of the national Indian empires, succeeded in unifying the greater part of the immense peninsula under a common rule despite tenacious local resistance. It was an autocratic and centralised empire and the position conferred upon the ruler was such that none of his subjects—not even the crown prince—had the slightest right to personal freedom or private property. So much was due to the indomitable will of an exile, Zahir ud-Din, known as 'Bābur' or the 'Lion', the fifth direct descendant of Tamerlane. After losing the little principality of Ferghana at the age of twelve, Bābur seized Kabul eight years later (1505) and transformed it into a small but militarily



25. Adham Khan thrown down from the walls of the palace of Agra on Akbar's orders in 1561. Mogul art, 16th–17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

26. Krishna and Rādhā. Rajput art, late 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

।राधिका कें प्रकास प्रलापु॥ =पली निकें मांग मिली हुती पै न
ति जामैं को कान्हु धौं =पाओ कहा तें॥ डीठि हि डीठि न डीठि
ली सुठि ढीठ गही उठि पीठि की बांतें॥ हौंग● डि लाज निहं



लुगई पै उठी जरि कै सब कांपनि पांतै॥ इती रिस मैं कवहुं
सही पै रही व विहौं =पधि जानि वै नातें॥१८०॥ ॥

25. Adham Khan thrown down from the walls of the palace of Agra on Akbar's orders in 1561. Mogul art, 16th–17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Illustration from the *Akbar Nāma* by Mīskinā and Sankar. The birds in the top right hand corner are Mīskinā's stylistic signature. The scene is very agitated in the lower half but singularly calm in the upper half, where even the executioner's gesture seems frozen.

26. Krishna and Rādhā. Rajput art, late 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Illustration from the *Rasikapriyā*, an erotic poem with rhetorical teachings. The miniature belongs to the Rājasthāni school of Mewar. A theatrical composition which may have been inspired by the theatre. The stiffness of the figures recalls the movements of the marionettes used for shadow shows.

27. Fleeing woman. Rajput art, second half of the 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Illustration from the *Amaruśataka*, love songs written in the 6th century by the poet Amaru. Miniatures of the Rājasthāni school. The female figure is framed by the shapes of light-coloured houses, standing against the dark night sky. The woman's furtive gestures are full of naturalism and vigour.

28. Falcon tethered to its perch. Mogul art, 17th century. British Museum, London. Realistic study of a bird greatly prized and loved by the Mogul hunters. Note the softness of the plumage and feathers and the rather approximative foreshortening of the perch. The work dates from the second half of the reign of Jahāngīr.

27. Fleeing woman. Rajput art, second half of the 17th century.


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28. Falcon tethered to its perch. Mogul art. 17th century. British Museum, London.



formidable state. He was invited to intervene in the internal wars in India, and after two years of fierce fighting had conquered Delhi and Agra. He then succeeded in winning mastery over the Rajput confederation by defeating Sangram Singh, the king of Mewar, despite incredible heroism shown by the enemy. In 1530 Bābur died, worn out by a lifetime of war and frenzied debauchery. His son Humāyūn was humane and cultured but weak physically, and was unable to resist the revolt of an Afghan officer, Sher Khan, who was the commander of the forces of Bihar. It seemed that the rise of the young Mogul empire had been interrupted for ever but the usurper, who had assumed the name of Sher Shāh, died in 1545. Ten years later, after uninterrupted fighting, Humāyūn re-entered Delhī—only to die the following year. Next on the throne was his thirteen-year-old son Akbar, who was to become one of the most splendid figures of Indian history.

With Akbar the dream of a national Indian empire became a reality, even if it did do so in the name of a foreign dynasty which expressed its pride in magnificent and unequivocal ancestry. Being descendants of Genghis Khan in theory and direct descendants of Tamerlane in reality, they felt and declared themselves to be 'Mongols' despite the copious Turkish blood in their veins and their Indo-Iranian culture, which was a blend of Moslem orthodoxy and scepticism, enlightened intelligence and curious limitations due to the autocratic, fiscal and often obtuse structure

of their empire. Bābur, a Turkish prince with the education of a Persian nobleman, took great interest in painting especially after visiting Herat, the brilliant centre of Islamic literary and artistic life. He admired the works by Bihzād, then at the peak of his fame, and was deeply impressed by the creative power of the greatest of all Persian miniaturists. During his stay at the Safavid court his son, Humāyūn, became acquainted with two of the greatest artists of the time, Mīr Sayyid Alī of Tabriz and Abd ush-Shamad of Shiraz, who both entered into his service. The first received the title 'Marvel of the Kingdom' while the second was appointed head of the Mint. He was also given the post of director of the imperial library, which gave him direct control over the court painters who would be commissioned to illustrate works belonging to the ruler. It was in this way that Persian art began to influence Indian painting, while the foundations were being laid for a first flowering of Mogul art.

Under Akbar the painting school which had been formed, thanks to the genius of the Persian painters, at Humāyūn's court, became an institution of great importance and was placed directly under the emperor's protection. The *Ain-i-Akbari* (the Rule of Akbar, a part of the history of Akbar compiled by Abū'l Fazl on orders from the emperor), which is one of the most important sources for the whole Mogul period, clearly shows the importance that the court school of miniature painting assumed during

this period. As far as style went the presence of Persian masters, who also played a pre-eminent organising role and who had specific functions as heads of painting schools, had a decisive influence on the development of a decidedly Iranian stylistic phase. The preference for Iranian tastes and forms was largely due to the fact that the Mogul artists were basically courtiers who worked for highly refined patrons, whose education had been much the same as that prescribed for Iranian princes and rulers. It was a logical development since the artists were trying to satisfy the tastes of their patrons as fully as possible, as may be seen not only by their style but also by their very choice of subjects. They often depicted sumptuous costumes, light-filled surroundings, scenes of warfare with great displays of infantry, cavalry, artillery and elephants, and hunting exploits which were trials of strength, courage and endurance rather than pastimes.

We may, if we like, divide Mogul miniatures into various main categories according to their subject matter: legends, historical events (including great hunting expeditions), erotic subjects (always very restrained) and portraits. Such divisions have no critical value but they do reflect perfectly the ideals and the customs of that remote world. We may bypass certain works such as the vast collections of miniatures which were prepared and executed by 'work groups', for example the famous *Dastān I-Amīr Hamzah* ('Legendary history of the emir

Hamzah', the Prophet's uncle—a saga filled with heroic and warlike episodes in the life of the emir as he endeavoured to convert his enemies to Islam by force), which was commissioned from Mīr Sayyid Alī by Humāyūn in 1550 and was later supervised by Akbar, for whom 1400 miniatures by various hands were prepared over a period of twenty-five years.

It should be noted that even more modest illustrations and cycles of paintings were executed in collaboration between specialised artists so that it is by no means rare or difficult to pick out the work of three different hands in the same miniature, one having made the drawing for the whole composition, the other distributing the colouring, and the third executing the features of the characters, both in the drawing stage and in the painting. The purpose of such a collaboration, which could sometimes be exceptionally harmonious, was to obtain a fast and high quality production of miniatures. This was another consequence of the tendency to industrialise painting activity which had encouraged if not caused the writing of the technical treatises of Hindu India in the classical and medieval periods. Naturally there was no lack of works by one single artist, just as there was no lack of other paintings in which the colourists had betrayed the intentions of their colleagues who had drawn the compositions. All this leads us to a curious critical problem: when two or three artists have collaborated, who then is the real author of the miniature? The truth is that even when documents in

29. Jahāngīr weighing Prince Khuram, the future Shāh Jahān. Mogul art, 1615, or perhaps earlier (1607). British Museum, London.





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29. Jahāngīr weighing Prince Khuram, the future Shāh Jahān. Mogul art, 1615, or perhaps earlier (1607). British Museum, London. A commemorative miniature intended as an illustration for the *Memoirs*. The prince's birthday is being celebrated amid the splendour of the court. Gold and silver to the equivalent of his weight will be distributed to the people. In the foreground, trays with gifts; in the background, a case filled with glass and ceramics. The important people present all have their names in writing.

30. Madonna and Child; from a European painting or print. Mogul art, 1625–1628. Johnson Album XIV, folio 2, India Office Library, London. The decoration of the dress is Indian and the costume does not follow the lines of the body. The unknown artist has re-elaborated European themes, even in the face of the Virgin. Miniature dating from the end of Jahāngīr's reign.

31. Madonna and Child. Mogul copy dating from *c*. 1600, from the etching made by Dürer in 1513. Windsor Castle. By gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen. The copy is particularly successful in the tree and the face of the Virgin. The harsh lines of the draperies are due to the artist's inability to understand their technique and structure in the original.

32. Noblewoman of mature age. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Johnson Album XIII, folio 5, India Office Library, London. Miniature of the reign of Shāh Jahān. A straightforward composition concentrating on the face, which still bears traces of former beauty. The right hand has been observed with exceptional care. On the whole, a penetrating psychological study even though the portrait may be imaginary.



32. Noblewoman of mature age. Mogul art, mid-17th century.

the archives give the name of the man administratively responsible for the work (usually the draughtsman) it is still impossible to find a satisfactory answer to the question since the basis of the problem remains—the presence of two or three collaborating artists. By force of habit, rather than out of conviction, most scholars have adopted the so-called Lermolieff method, attributing paternity of the work to the draughtsman and relegating the painter of faces to the lowest rank in the hierarchy of colleagues. But of course, when one of the collaborators had a strong creative personality it would be clearly revealed in the work, even if his own role had been restricted and highly specialised.

The consequence is that the activity of the Mogul miniaturists cannot be measured by the same standards as those used for the evaluation of European pictorial art. Quite apart from the problems raised by this curious multiplicity of authors, the first works of the Mogul period were essentially Iranian works executed in Indian territory for Turkish rulers reigning over Indians. This did not, however, prevent the rapid rise to fame of native Indian artists, for example Daswanth (or Dasavanta, from a root word *dasa* meaning slave or servant), the son of a poor servant who carried litters. Since childhood Daswanth had been so passionately addicted to painting that he drew figures of all kinds on walls. After being discovered thus occupied by Akbar he was entrusted into the care of Abd ush-Shamad for instruction,

under whom he made quick progress and in a short time became the best painter of his age. But, as Abū'l Fazl wrote, 'unfortunately, the light of his genius was darkened by the shadow of madness', for when his genius and fame were at their peak he committed suicide with no apparent reason for his terrible decision.

Basāwan, like Daswanth, won fame and glory. Highly skilled in the representation of perspective, in drawing, and in the use of colour and in portraits, he contested with his unfortunate rival for first place among the artists in the time of Akbar. Both artists opened the way for a progressive transformation of Mogul art into a purely Indian art. To some extent such a transformation depended upon the favourable conditions that Akbar created for his artists. In his weekly visits to the workshops he would praise and reward those artists who, in his opinion, were the most deserving, and he would urge them to emulate the great Persian painters and, later, those European artists whose fame had reached India even though their original works obviously remained unknown.

From the very beginning, knowledge of European art depended solely on illustrations to sacred Christian texts and on the few devotional images brought by ambassadors and merchants. It was only later that copies and good quality prints reached India. What is certain is that a European element appeared in Mogul painting at quite an early stage, showing itself mainly in perspective, especially in

landscapes. The adoption of European, and more especially Italian, techniques resulted in the elimination of some of the rigid schemas of Indian art, and artists began to stress the receding perspective of landscape by means of a new and different visual technique until there was a violent contrast with the Gujarāt school of painting, with its vertically rendered perspective. It would be possible to follow the evolution of Indian miniature painting simply by observing the changing way in which natural surroundings were represented. It is an indisputable fact that the Indians always had a strong feeling for nature—so much so that one of the great epic poems takes it for granted that Rāma was able to calm himself after the loss of his kingdom simply by contemplating Mount Citrakūta ('the peaks and rocks stand out in a thousand different shapes and shine with infinite colours—silver, purple, azure and emerald. The flanks of the mountain are green banners resplendent with gold embroidery, and the carpets of dying wild flowers are like many coloured bursts of flame that do not burn'—From the *Ayodhyakānda* of the *Rāmāyana*, 104).

In India there had always existed the desire to place man in his relation to nature, to search for the mysterious, secret affinities between the states of the soul and the various aspects, sad or joyful, of the surrounding world. Consequently, as the Persian influence became stronger, it was only natural that nature should once again become one of the funda-

33. Young girl combing her hair. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Johnson Album XIII, folio 6. India Office Library, London.

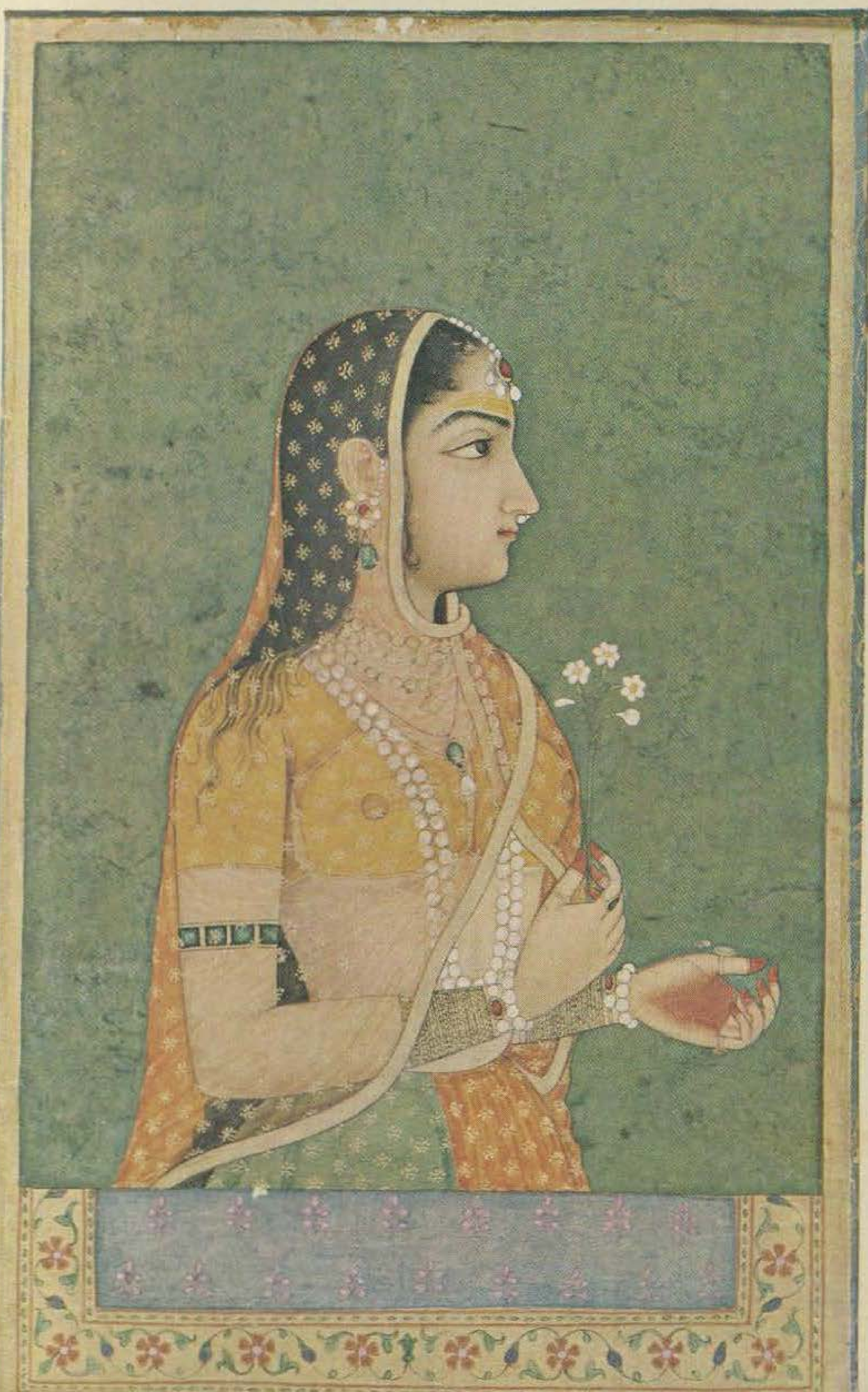


33. Young girl combing her hair. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Johnson Album XIII, folio 6, India Office Library, London. Miniature of the reign of Shāh Jahān. A genre scene with a single figure, the face represented in the manner of the so-called 'provincial schools'. The balance of the composition is unaffected by the intensity of the expression, which is intended to focus attention on the girl's face and gesture.

34. Young Gujarāt lady. Mogul art, early 18th century. Johnson Album XI, folio 2, India Office Library, London. Muhammad Afzal painted the same model, with her veils and jewels, at least twice, altering only her costume. The artist had moved away from the manner of great Mogul art, and had come closer to the more popular style of the provincial schools. He has skilfully made use of the rigid pose and profile in a portrait which seems to be from life.

35. Lady. From Lord Clive's Album. Mogul art, second half of the 18th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The figure by the tree is set against a background which brings out every minor detail, and her contours accord with the characteristic pictorial 'vision' of the Mogul artists.

36. Two dancing girls. Mogul art, 17th century. Indian Museum, Calcutta. The whirling motion of the dance, often represented by Mogul miniaturists, is particularly well suggested by the flowing draperies. The arch of the bodies transforms the subject into a decorative pattern as refined as the delicately worked frame around the oval.



34. Young Gujarāt lady. Mogul art, early 18th century.



35. Lady. From Lord Clive's Album. Mogul art, second half of the 18th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



36. Two dancing girls. Mogul art, 17th century. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

mental elements in every composition, even though in Gujarāt art the desire to avoid any suggestion of relief or depth led artists to represent natural surroundings in a strictly conventional manner. For the Gujarāt painters, mountains were to be represented by an indented, snaking line with almost triangular points and valleys, indicating the artist's imaginary conception of landscape. Clouds, represented by unbroken festoons, and water, shown by interlacing, interconnected lines, completed the limited repertory of landscape motifs that were used most commonly. Flowers could also be stylised and distorted according to the decorative requirements of the composition, but they were less affected by this simplifying process although they might be strongly modified—in size especially—with sometimes happy results.

The rise of the Mogul school favoured a return to naturalism that was more in keeping with the intimate sensibilities of the Indians who, in the *Vishnudharmottara,* had codified the most effective way of representing the six seasons (spring, summer, rainy season, autumn, season of dew, winter) and had listed the details that could be used for expressing the transformations that came over life and landscape at different times of the year, even through the seasonal aspects of human and animal life and the rhythm of all plant life.

When Iranian influence in art first made itself felt there was not the slightest interest in the three-

dimensionality and volume that characters and objects had in real life. Artists were even less interested in such considerations when it was a question of characterising environment, in its aspect of landscape, by means of conventional symbols. In its traditional tendency to represent objects two-dimensionally and to superimpose them, this painting was not so very different from the schematic style of the Gujarāt school although the tendency did become attenuated and artists very often composed works in which objects were seen from two different points of view. The way the spectator was made to view the picture was continually changing. Characters in full or three-quarter profile, animals and buildings were shown from the normal viewpoint but carpets, roofs and rivers were represented in bird's eye view, seen from above. How it was that artists were still able to create harmonious compositions is not easy to explain. Usually the solution to the problem depended on the talent and genius of the artist, which were often outstanding.

In the Indo-Persian phase of miniature painting, landscape details were inspired by Far Eastern art: clouds were like those in Chinese paintings and mountains were painted in a manner similar if not identical to that in Central Asian paintings. Skies were either dark blue or golden and usually presented a uniform background. The highly stylised representation of water—also reminiscent of ancient art and Central Asian mural painting—depended upor

spirals and interlacing lines. In any event such elements did not have the same importance as that attributed to them in Chinese painting, and they featured less frequently. All these characteristics were carried over directly, and without the slightest variation, into Mogul painting which strangely enough gave preference to the type of vegetation that was most representative of Persian flora. Whereas Indian art favoured large, leafy trees and generally 'saw' the mass of the foliage as a patch of colour or as a spatial volume, the Persian tradition stressed the linearity of tree-trunks, contorted, blossoming shrubs and slender lines of cypresses. The result was that the Mogul miniaturists who were inspired by the Persians had a predilection for cypresses, plane trees and shrubs which made so many colour-patches. It may be said that Persian flora became transplanted in India by artists working in the Persian style during the first phase of Mogul art. But as Mogul art became more independent, inspiration of the surroundings gained the upper hand. Artists painted the great trees of Indian plains, giving them a realistic consistency, and treated the foliage and trunks in a traditional manner which seemed to delight in truth at all costs without neglecting even the slightest detail capable of giving a particular plant its own individuality. The consequence was that Mogul painters would represent 'that' tree and not any tree taken as a synthesis of the whole species.

With the transformation of flora, the whole land-

scape changed as well. Artists began to experiment in the representation of distance and horizontal perspective, (*dūr numā*) inspired by the West. Their efforts were welcomed at the court of Akbar and his successors, one reason being that the illusive and artistic validity of a work of art were regarded as part of the progressive movement away from Islamic orthodoxy which was considered to be sterile and rigid. It is also worth remembering that Akbar had tried to found a new syncretistic religion combining Islamic precepts with other Hindu and Christian teachings, so that the imitation of reality also came to be a symbol of latent rebellion against Islamic doctrine which had forbidden images and, in particular, the representation of human beings. The new style was also the result of a cultural attitude which was far from orthodox and had originated in Islamic Iran before being taken to extreme lengths by the Moguls.

In paintings the line of the horizon was lowered; the sky became tinted with greys, pinks, azure and gold tones; clouds were represented in the Western manner, being shown as masses of vapour; and starry night skies sometimes displayed a study of reality that would have been inconceivable a few years previously. Even architectural perspective was brought as close to reality as possible, so that artists considered it a point of honour to reproduce the vision of the human eye.

Naturally, the results of this new artistic endeavour, which included precise studies of colour and chiaro-

37. Portrait of Ibrahim II, Shāh Adil of Bijapur (1580–1626). Mogul art, *c.* 1615. British Museum, London. The sovereign is shown in a shady garden while the great palace in the background, rendered with almost scientific perspective, is a sign of the splendour of the regal residences. The minute treatment of details in the vestments, ornaments and flowers is characteristic of the school of Bijapur.

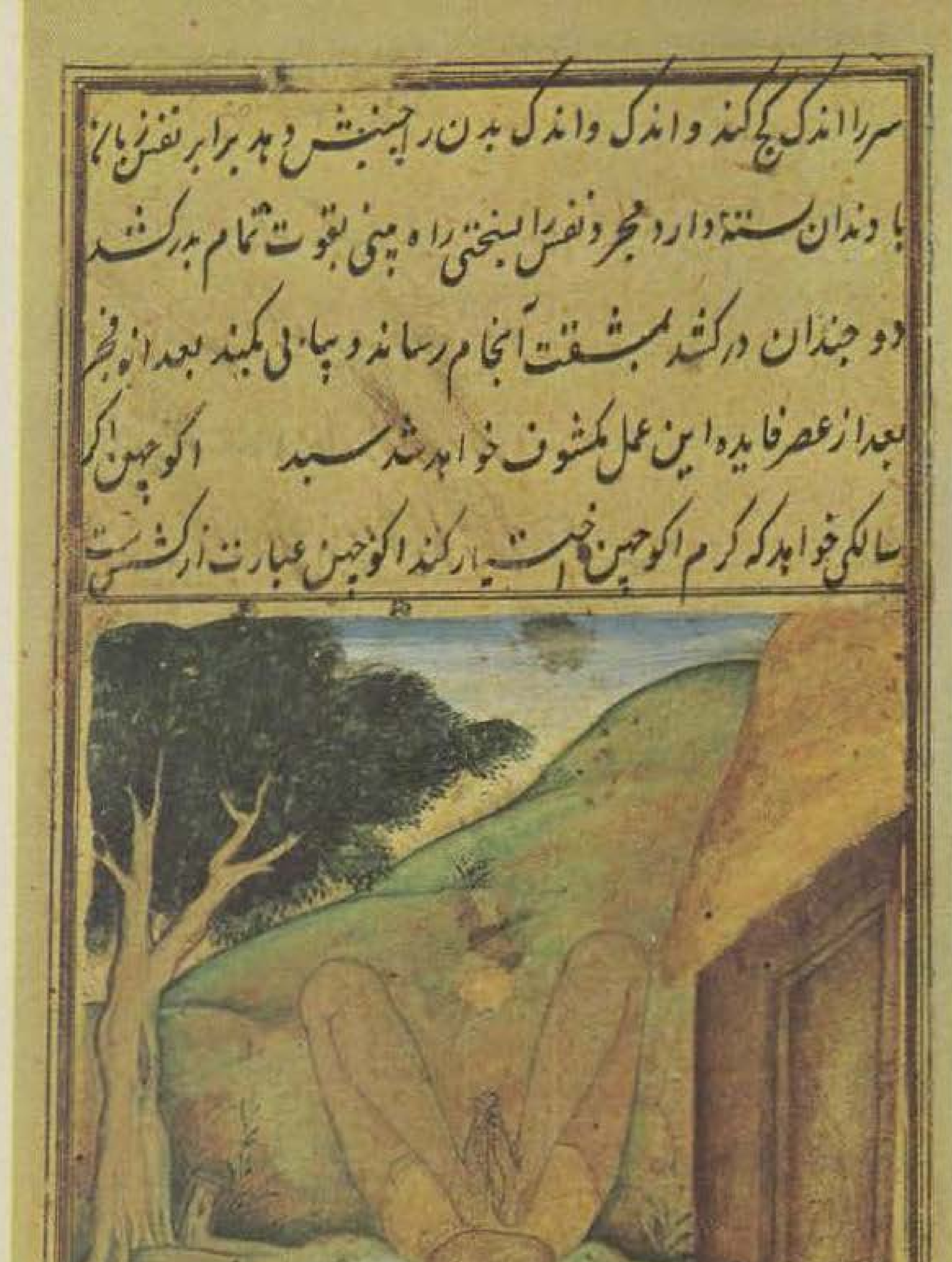
38. A yoga posture. Mogul art, late 16th–early 17th century. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Miniature from a yoga text translated into Persian: *Bahr al Hayāt*. The work is far removed from the schematic representations of the same theme in Hindu art, for it is naturalistic not only in the body but in the surrounding landscape.

39. Official portrait of Jahāngīr holding his father Akbar's portrait. Mogul art, *c.* 1599. Musée Guimet, Paris. In large part the miniature is the work of Abū'l Hassan (who signed himself Nadir al Zaman). It was retouched in about 1605. In the portrait within the portrait, Akbar is offering his son the world, meaning *his* world according to a European symbolism which has here been exploited in order to establish a link of cordial continuity between the two emperors.

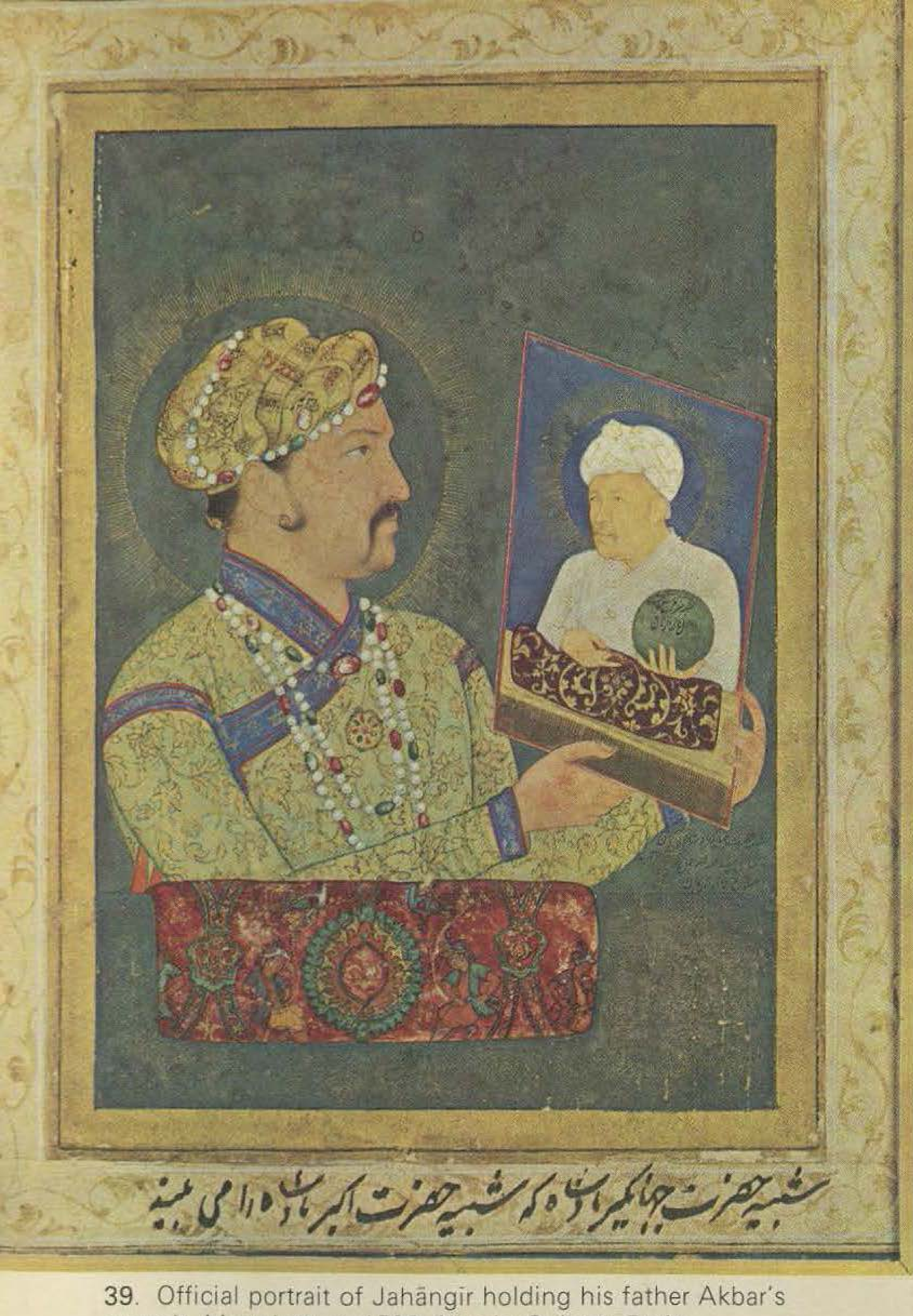
40. Bābur, the 'Lion', with guests in his palace. Mogul art, late 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. Anonymous miniature. The sumptuous interior of the court, the rich carpets and the furnishings intended to set off the precious glassware, form a major part of a composition which still retains the conventional rendering of perspective in the Persian style.



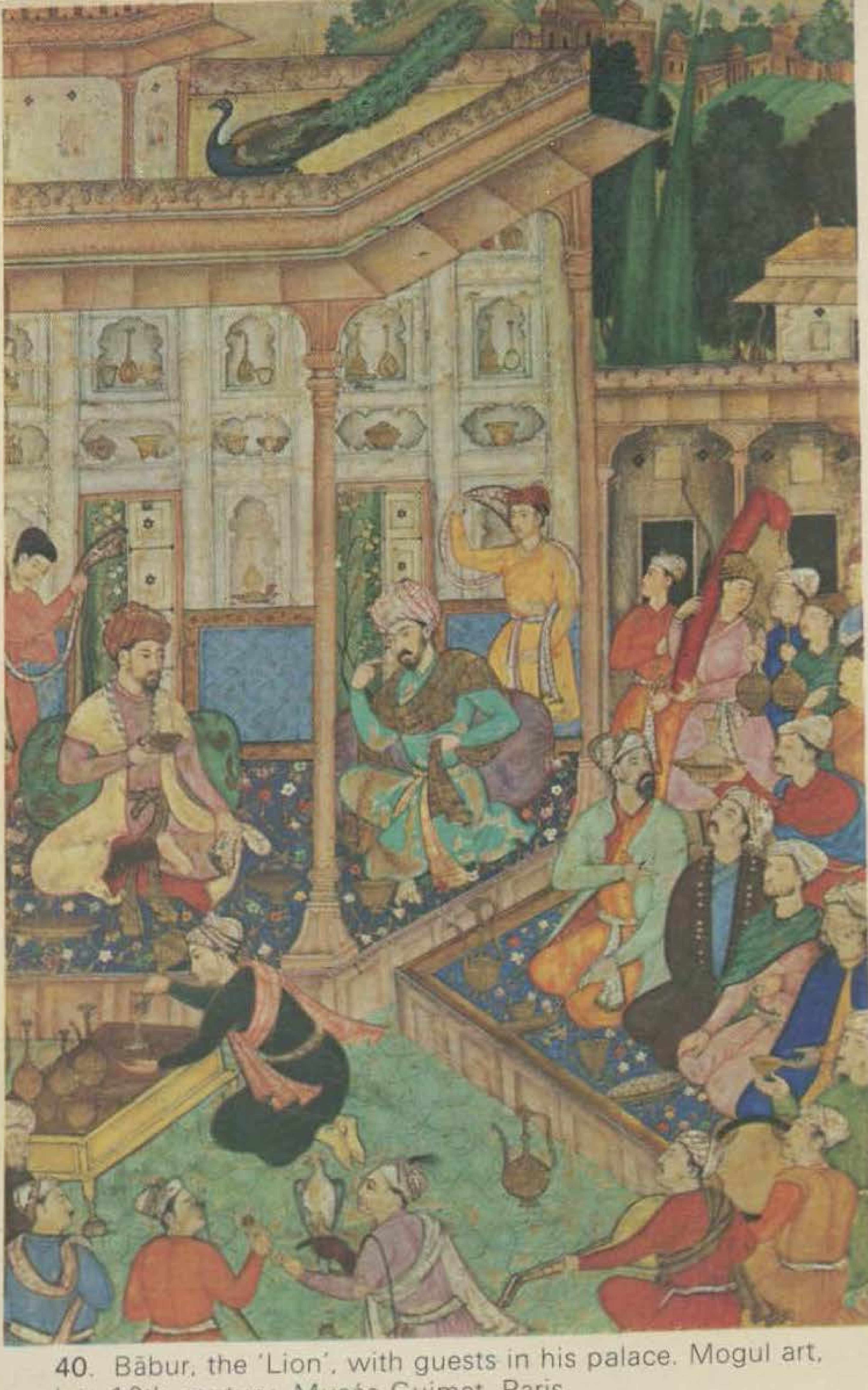
37. Portrait of Ibrahim II, Shāh Adil of Bijapur



38. A yoga posture. Mogul art, late 16th–early 17th century. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.



39. Official portrait of Jahāngīr holding his father Akbar's portrait. Mogul art, *c*. 1599. Musée Guimet, Paris.



40. Bābur, the 'Lion', with guests in his palace. Mogul art, late 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

scuro effects, could not stand comparison with the achievements of Western artists, but there is no doubt that such a new departure in Asiatic art in general and Indian art in particular was an exceptional development that was to be rich in consequences. Artists took an even greater interest in nature and landscapes under Jahāngīr, Akbar's successor. In his *Memoirs*, he showed an exceptional sensitivity to the fascination of the perfumed plains of the Malva and the quiet valleys of Kashmir, strewn with wild flowers. For Jahāngīr, spring had a subtle enchantment which, among other things, 'illumines with the red glow of tulip doors, walls, courtyards and roofs', while mountains and plains 'burst into flower and cover themselves with green mantles'. At his own instigation realistic landscape painting in the open air made its first appearance in Indian art. It was to be short-lived but it had far-reaching effects.

Under the saturnine Aurangzeb, fourth and last of the great Mogul sovereigns, there was a return to greater religious orthodoxy and traditional decorative conventions in landscape painting. Silver and gold backgrounds became fashionable again, although past experience could be neither denied nor forgotten. Mogul landscapes once again used precious colours with a silver- and gold-powder basis and followed traditional lines, although in a quite different, clearly impressionist spirit.

The transformation of the Mogul school had been profoundly influenced, in both its doctrinal and its

purely figurative aspects, by contact with the Western world, notably with the Portuguese who were regarded with favour by the Hindu sovereigns because of their common hostility to Islam. Apart from the often enlightened and restrained activities of Christian missionaries, the Europeans brought new scientific, technical and artistic knowledge to Mogul India. Above all, they aroused the interest of the emperors—beginning with Akbar—in Christian thought and the uses and customs of the West. The Portuguese Jesuit Fernao Guerreiro was not unreasonably astonished when he visted Jahāngīr's palace at Agra and found enormous frescoes by local artists representing such subjects as Christ in Majesty, the Madonna, Saint Luke, various episodes from the Passion, scenes from the Acts of the Apostles and the lives of Saints Anne and Susannah.

European paintings and prints had come into India during the reign of Akbar.

In 1580, the mission led by the Neapolitan Jesuit Rodolpho Acquaviva brought the emperor a copy of the Royal Polyglot Bible of Philip II of Spain, printed in eight volumes by Plantin at Antwerp, and a copy of the Byzantine Madonna from the Borghese Chapel at S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, as well as another picture of the Redeemer which Akbar ordered to be kissed by his sons and most of his courtiers. The Bible was illustrated with fine frontispiece engravings in each volume, which naturally aroused great interest; Akbar immediately ordered his

painters to make faithful copies of them all. The results demonstrated the absolute impossibility of copying a European work with the means available in India, but above all, they proved that the Europeans had a technique for creating pictorial illusion that was completely unknown in the East. The result was that the Indians were immediately filled by a desire to broaden their own technique and master something that at first sight seemed rather strange and difficult to understand for those who were not used to traditional Persian and Indian techniques of representing perspective.

Interest in European painting and figurative techniques reached its height under Jahāngīr, Akbar's third son who succeeded him, although prints and famous works from the West had already begun to arrive under Akbar.

At the age of thirteen, Abū'l Hassan had executed a praiseworthy copy of Dürer's *Saint John of the Cross*, while almost at the same time, in about 1600, an anonymous court artist made a copy of the *Madonna and Child* that Dürer had engraved in 1513. It may now be seen in the Royal Library at Windsor. Besides engravings by Dürer, other German and Flemish engravings by such artists as Maerten von Heemskerck, J. Sadeler, H. S. Beham and the two Van der Heyden, were copied by the court miniaturists.

Both then and later a strong impression was made by Italian works, and in the last period of Jahāngīr's



41. Ten birds. Page from a natural history manuscript. Mogul art, late 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

42. Portrait of a courtier. Mogul art. British Museum, London.

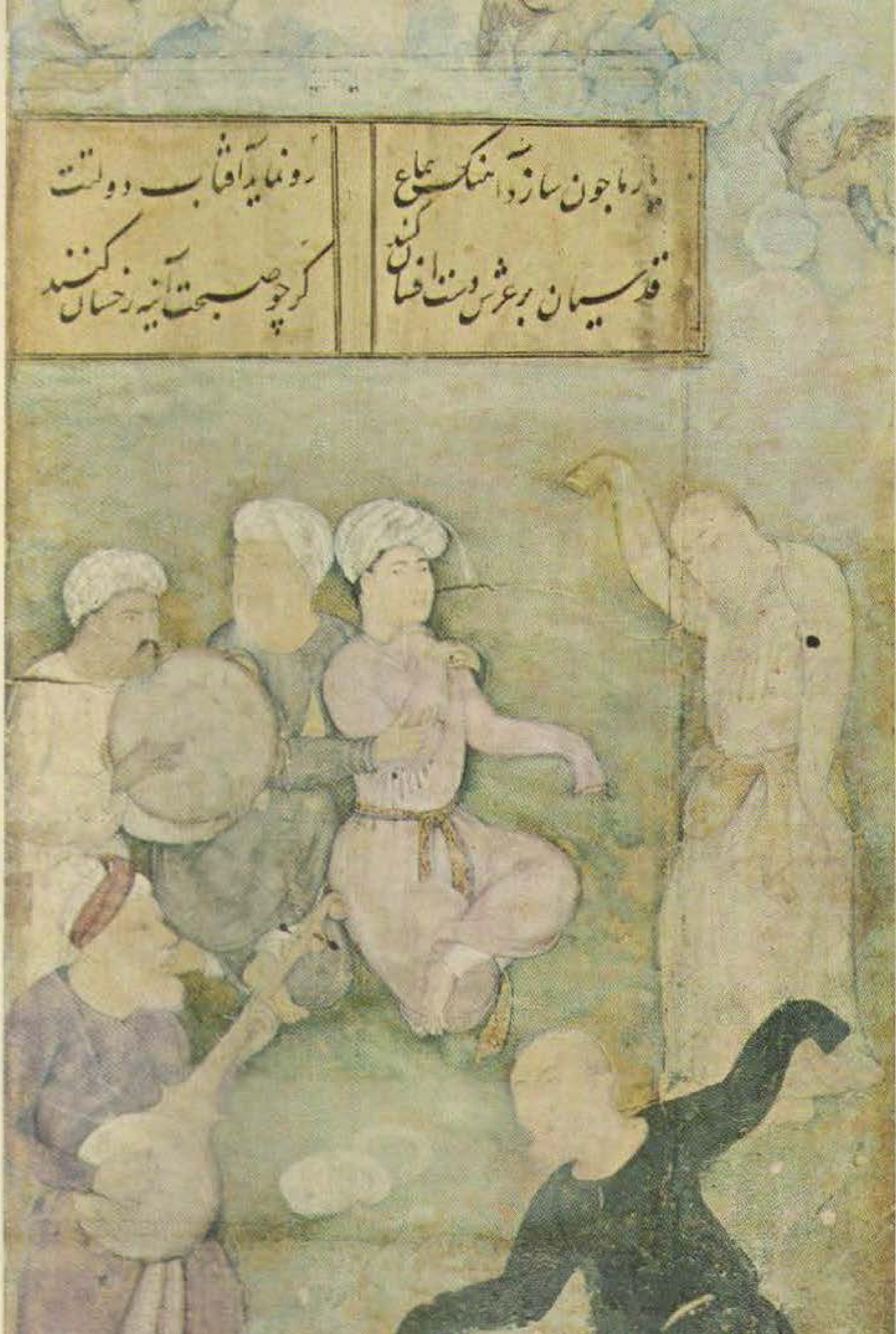


41. Ten birds. Page from a natural history manuscript. Mogul art, late 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. The miniature is signed by Mīskinā and was made to satisfy Akbar's curiosity concerning animals and various forms of life. With his usual skill, the artist has combined real life birds with others that appear to belong to fantasy. The work is executed in water colours.

42. Portrait of a courtier. Mogul art. British Museum, London. The most salient characteristic of the portrait is the contrast between the dignified immobility of the figure and the undulating flow and wide, sinuous folds of the draperies. The two birds with outstretched wings in the top of the miniature are extraordinarily effective.

43. Dancing dervishes. Mogul art, 1610. British Museum, London. Illustration from a copy of the *Diwan* by Hāfiz. The dervishes (from the Persian *darvish*: a pauper or mendicant) were an order of vagrant mystics who attained a form of ecstasy in their dances. In this picture, two old dervishes are executing a whirling dance in a state of acute exaltation while a third sings to the accompaniment of his guitar. In the sky, spirits resembling cherubs have appeared, drawn by the magical power of the dance.

44. Arrival of a young guest at a banquet. Mogul art, 1610. British Museum, London. Illustration from a copy of the *Diwan* by Hāfiz. The banquet is taking place in an enclosed garden with delicate and rather theatrical architecture, shown in highly sophisticated perspective. Apart from the colours of the sky, the Persian-style tree and the architectural decoration, it is to be noted that the painter has endeavoured to give a realistic representation of almost idyllic surroundings in contrast with the hard features of the characters.



43. Dancing dervishes. Mogul art, 1610.


در دیر مغان آمد یارم قدحی در دست
مست از می و میخواران از نرگس مستش مست

rule, and during the entire reign of his successor Shāh Jahān, a number of Indian works were directly inspired by those of Italian painters and engravers who had become known at the Mogul court mostly through high-quality copies. Many Italians came to India: not only missionaries and adventurers but also Milanese and Florentine goldsmiths, craftsmen and doctors made their way to the East. Italian artillery experts won particular renown, like the two Milanese Giovanmaria and Pietrantonio who made more than 'five hundred cannons both big and little' at Calcutta, teaching their local collaborators casting techniques, the different uses of artillery pieces, and Western military theories and stratagems. This Italian presence favoured the arrival of countless copies of works of art, since it was known that such gifts were welcomed by the emperors. It was for this reason that the English ambassador Sir Thomas Roe thought it necessary to write to London to ask for valuable works of art to be sent 'Like those rich paintings that come from Italy over land and by way of Ormuz'.

The Mogul court soon became interested in European styles and techniques. Many Indians became able to make a precise appraisal of the technical level and quality of European works. This phase of artistic preparation, also influenced by the great frescoes which decorated Christian churches and monasteries in India, was reflected in local artistic production and favoured a kind of fusion

44. Arrival of a young guest at a banquet. Mogul art, 1610. British Museum, London.

between Indian and European and, more especially, Italian ideals. The same process was reversed in the West where artists like Rembrandt and Sir Joshua Reynolds took a great interest in Indian miniatures, while one 17th-century Dutch master, William Schellincks, remained greatly impressed by the 'caprices' which recurred in Mogul painting, such as those in which an image was filled with an enormous number of minor figures until it became transformed into a swarm of bodies.

The European element in Mogul painting was much greater than one would at first imagine, although this by no means excluded great originality on the part of the miniaturists who limited themselves to enriching their technique and widening their range of interests. But there was a decline during the reign of Aurangzeb, who was proclaimed emperor in 1658 and was so inspired by his intransigent Moslem orthodoxy that he wished to transform India into the leading nation in the Islamic world and the greatest power in Eurasia. His anti-historical ambitions provoked the revolt of the Sikhs and the Rajput, and led to a terrible war against the Maharata, full of atrocities and amazing feats of heroism. But even the iron will of this emperor, who personally led his troops in the assault upon the Maharata fortifications, had to bend in 1705 to the tenacity of the enemy, thus beginning the disintegration of the Indian empire.

The great evolution of Mogul miniature painting

took place in the period spanning the reigns of Akbar and Aurangzeb.

Subsequent works in the surviving style are pleasing enough but without any real importance. The destiny of the Indian empire was to be traced in the very character of Indian painting. After the dynamism and vitality of the works created during the reign of Akbar, came the calm and majesty of the miniatures and portraits of the following century. At first the subjects preferred by artists were legendary —like episodes in the story of Hamzah—or historical, but they also contained descriptive details even when the compositions became highly complex, as in the scene of the siege of Rantambhōr, one of the illustrations of the *Akbar Nāma* which dates from the last years of Akbar's reign. Despite the massing of figures in the deep gully along which a heavy piece of artillery is being carried by a couple of oxen and soldiers, the diagonal composition and the restricted space in which the figures are crowded—shown in a changing and far from orthodox perspective—the painting has an almost journalistic descriptive quality which becomes even more apparent in the gestures, faces, and costumes of the soldiers. Even the contrast between the multi-coloured tents and the artillery emplacements serves to give movement, description and gaiety to the scene. Moreover, this was the period in which the empire was still in process of formation and the shock of battle was regarded as a pleasing subject even when it could lead



صحرا و کوهها سیر کرده ایم هیچ جا بخوبی این آهو آهوی ندیده ایم تو اگر از امی کشی از پوست او
لباسی میسازیم که زن هیچ راجه بخوبی آن لباس نداشته باشد رام با لچمن گفت که سیتا بسیار مایل
آهو شده و در واقع مانند این آهو ما نه در باغ نندن بن نزد غیر آن دیده ایم و هر کس خاطر امان این طر
آهوی باشد اگر سیتا فریفته او شود چه عجب که هم جواهرش کمیاب است و هم پوستش خوب رنگ تو اینجا
محافظت سیتا می کرده باش که من میروم و این آهو را به تیر می زنم و پوستش را پیش سیتا میرسانم تو ما از
تیر کمان خود گرفته حاظر باش زنهار از سیتا جدا نشوی و چنانچه گرگیس نه بمن وعده کرده است و گفته
که منهم در محافظت سیتا شریک لچمن خواهم بود تو او را همراه خود بگیر و اینجا باش رام این گفت و از دنبال
آهو روان شد آهو دوید و رام تیر در زه نهاد چون خواست که بیندازد آهو یک ناگاه از نظر غائب
همین طور خیلی راه دوید چنانکه گاهی آشکار او گاهی پنهان بود آخر آنچه قصد و تیری برد زد


۹۴
وگرد برگرد رامچند گردیدند و پای او را بوسیدند و ازو رخصت گرفته رفتند و رامچند
و بسوامتر سخن کنان از انجا پیشتر گذشتند چون پاره راه رفتند از پس سپاهی عظیم مانند
ابر سیاه پیدا شد رامچند از بسوامتر پرسید که درین نزدیکی جنگلی انبوه و ابری سیاه می نماید

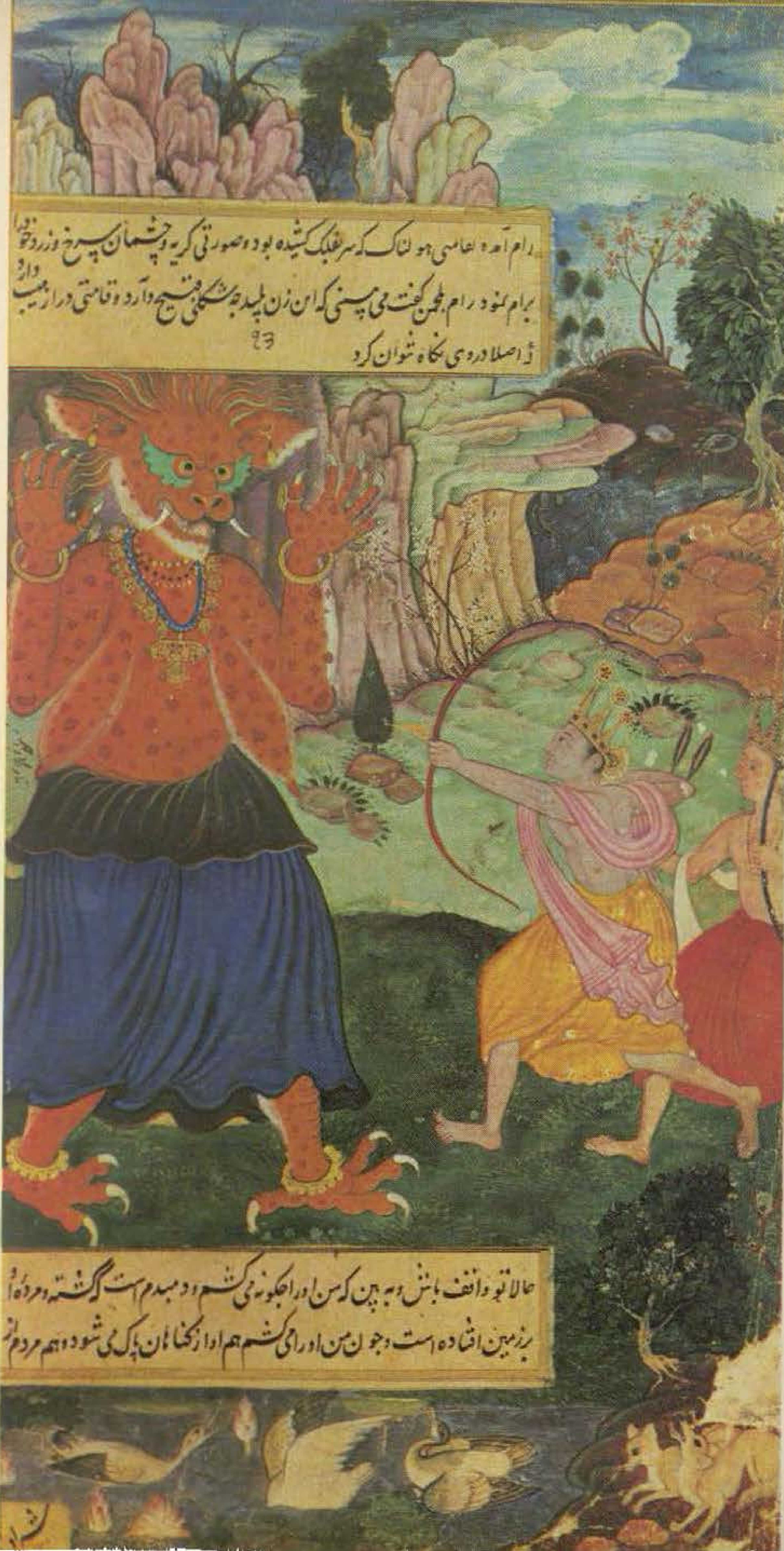
45. Rāma pursuing the gazelle with the golden fleece. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature from the *Rāmāyana* by Vālmīki, translated into Persian and copied by Khan-i-Khanan, i.e. Akbar, the King of Kings. Probably a copy or a derivation of a lost original. The gazelle is the demon Mārīca sent by Rāvana, the monstrous and demoniacal King of Lankā (Ceylon).

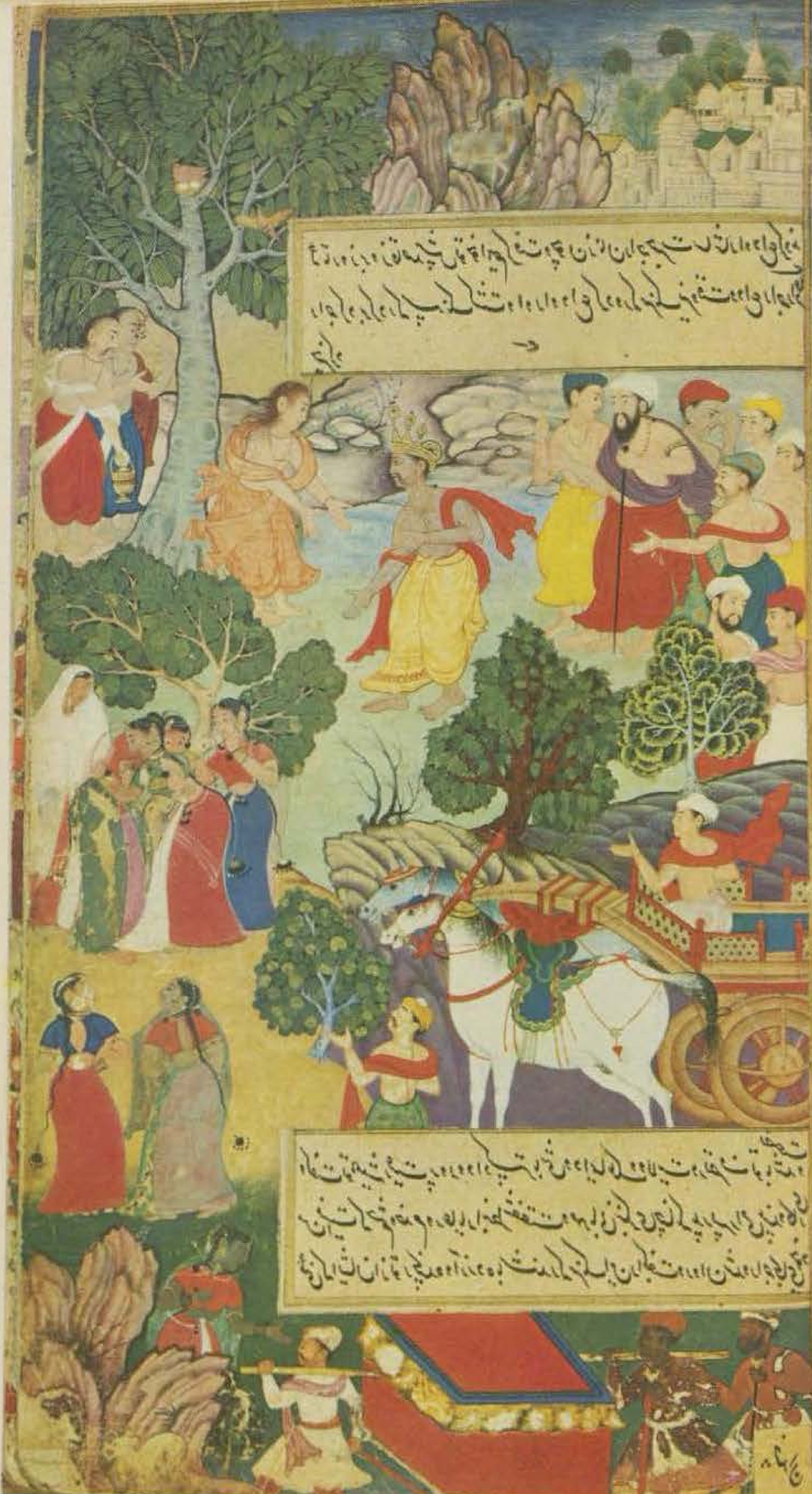
46. Rāma meeting Angada; a group of gods: Brahma, Śiva, Vishnu and Vayu (above). Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature from the *Rāmāyana* by Vālmīki. Note the powerful but almost abstract treatment of the rocks, the detailed rendering of the soldier of fortune, his army of monkeys and the counsellor Hanumat, son of Vayu the wind-god.

47. Fight between Rāma and one of the Rākshasa. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature from the *Rāmāyana* by Vālmīki. The demoniacal figure of the cannibalistic demon stands out vigorously against a background of rocks.

48. Rāma and Sītā at Lankā. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature from the *Rāmāyana* by Vālmīki. The swarm of figures, with well observed attitudes, are set in an almost impressionistic landscape.

47. Fight between Rāma and one of the Rākshasa. Mogul art, 1598–1599.


رام آمده عاصی هولناک که سر بفلک کشیده بود و صورتی کریه و چشمان سرخ و زرد
برام نمود رام بلچمن گفت می بینی که این زن پلید چه شکلی قبیح دارد و قامتی دراز مهیب
و اصلا در وی نگاه نتوان کرد
۹۳
حالا تو واقف باش و به بین که من او را چگونه می کشم و دم بدم است گشته و مرده
بر زمین افتاده است و چون من او را می کشم هم او از گناهان پاک می شود و هم مردم



to such horrors as the suicide of the Rajput women during the siege of Chitor, when they threw themselves into flames which they had lit in order to escape falling into the hands of the victorious besiegers.

But even historical narrative scenes became balanced and restrained in spirit. This was partly due to the influence of European painting in which everything was always calculated even when it appeared spontaneous, and partly to the impact of the great personality of Mīskinā, an artist who may have been a Christian and who specialised in historical themes. We know for certain that he worked with Basāwan, Lal, Kesu the elder and Madhu the elder, on the *Akbar Nāma,* now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and still the most beautiful historical work of the Mogul period.

During the reign of Jahāngīr, Akbar's successor, Western influences were more noticeable and miniature painting changed in spirit. It was a precise reflection of the new dominant personality of the times. The highly cultured, sensitive, intelligent yet cruel Jahāngīr, who had an absolute devotion for his beloved wife—the terrible Nūr Jahān, the 'light of the world', a Persian poetess of extraordinary beauty whom he had married at the cost of much bloodshed—showed his interest in the humble joys of the world and was passionately interested in the lives of Moslem mystics and dervishes, neglecting affairs of state to draw fresh spiritual strength from the contemplation of nature and works of art. In his last years he showed

48. Rāma and Sītā at Lankā. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

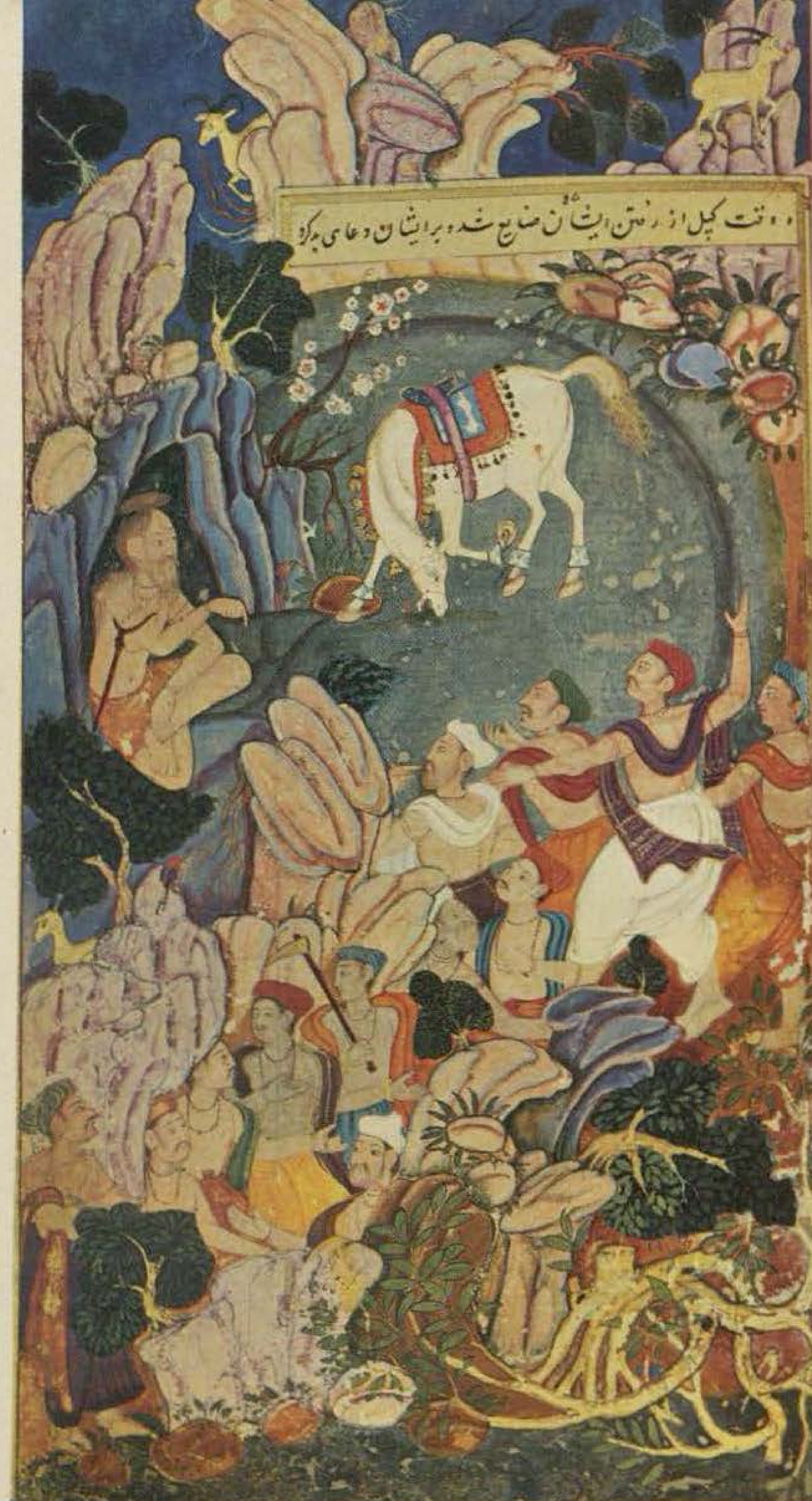
his interest not only in symbolical compositions but even in genre scenes which reflected real life, while his favourite painter, Abū'l Hassan, represented him with symbols of universal power such as the globe in his hand, a sign of total regality derived from the West, with his feet on a lion, symbolising majesty, or with his feet on the world.

In the final phase, Jahāngīr came to be represented as a supernatural being. It is enough to see certain scenes of apotheosis, or the cloud that rings his head in certain miniatures—later a common motif—to realise he had henceforth escaped from all human dimensions. It was this factor which led R. Ettinghausen rightly to conclude that these compositions reflect a very special kind of psychological evaluation due to the fact that Jahāngīr had been shaken in his constitution and morale by excessive indulgence in alcohol and opium and the hostility of his son, the future Shāh Jahān, who showed an implacable hatred towards the empress and the entire court. As a result the emperor appeared as an almost abstract and inaccessible entity, the source of the regality and power that others were fighting for and using for their own particular ends.

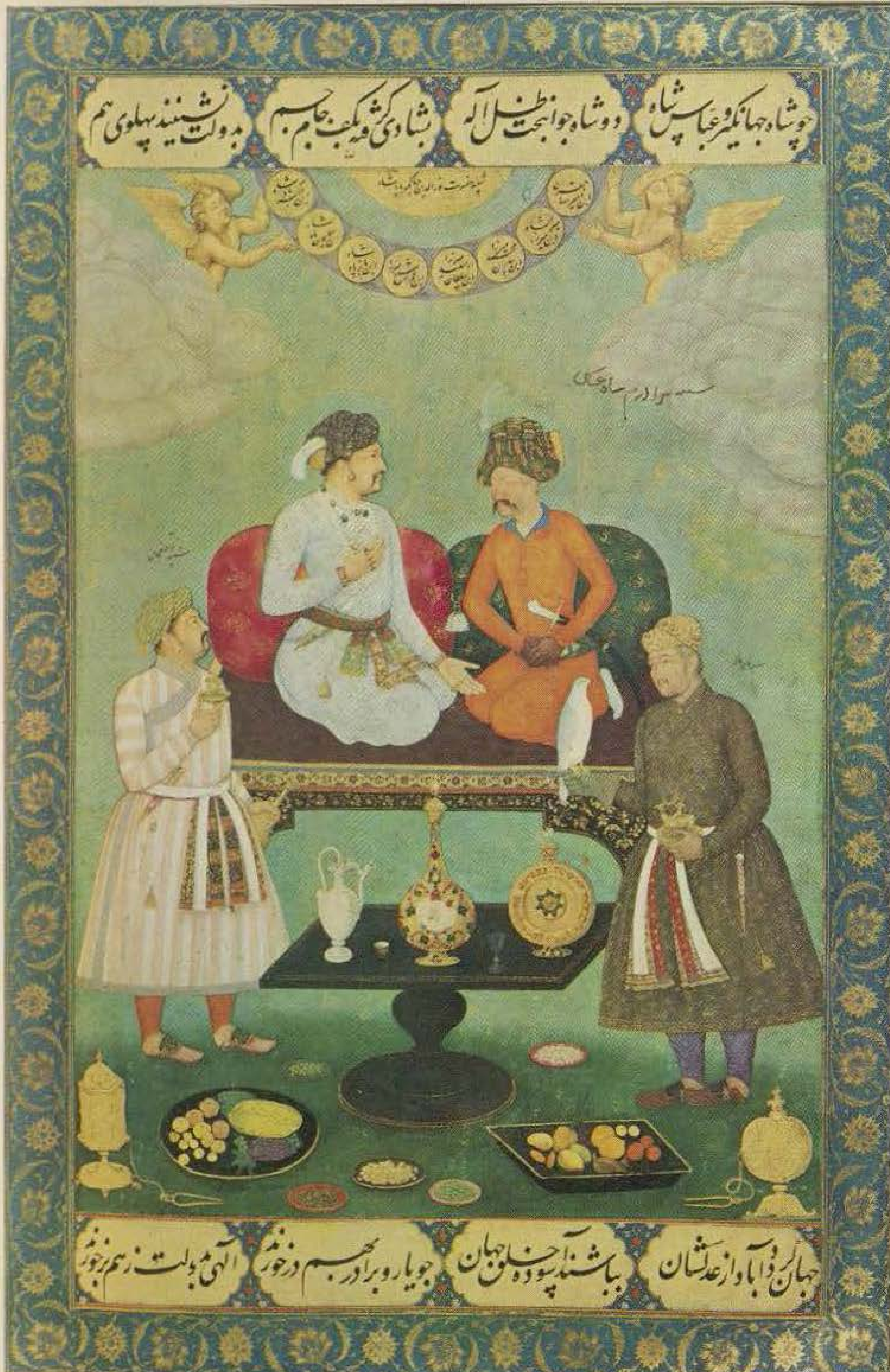
Under Shāh Jahān the Mogul empire entered a new period of splendour. The energetic and brilliant shāh dreamed of giving his empire a leading role in Asiatic history, but his dream was shattered by the military organisation of the Persians who had closely emulated European and Turkish progress in the arts

of war. But in the field of art, even though paintings still equalled or even surpassed the quality of those made during the reign of Jahāngīr, there was a process of involution, partly determined by the increase in the burden of taxation which greatly affected painters outside the privileged circle of court artists. In addition, the shāh was more interested in architecture, and although artists produced ever increasing numbers of commemorative portraits of him and showed an almost natural talent for amazing psychological studies of their sitter, the emperor was tired of pictorial problems. He preferred the enchantment of the splendid estates and landscapes in his immense empire, and the study of the relationships between nature and architecture, a style derived from that of Persia and containing several European elements.

The first proof of his architectural interests is the world-famous Tāj Mahal, which he ordered and had built under his direct supervision to honour the memory of the empress Mumtaz Mahal whom he had loved to the point of madness. In his final years he entrusted his eldest son, Dāra Shikoh, with the responsibility of supervising the library and the miniaturists' workshops. The faithful friendship for Dāra Shikoh of an Italian adventurer, doctor, artillery expert and daredevil, Niccolò Mannucci, led to the increase of Italian influence in Mogul miniature painting, particularly that of the Italian Mannerists which now became striking. The romantic, cultured, sensitive Dāra Shikoh was captured and put to death



49. Encounter with a hermit in the wilderness. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.



50. Meeting of Jahāngīr with Shāh Abbās. Mogul art, 1620. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

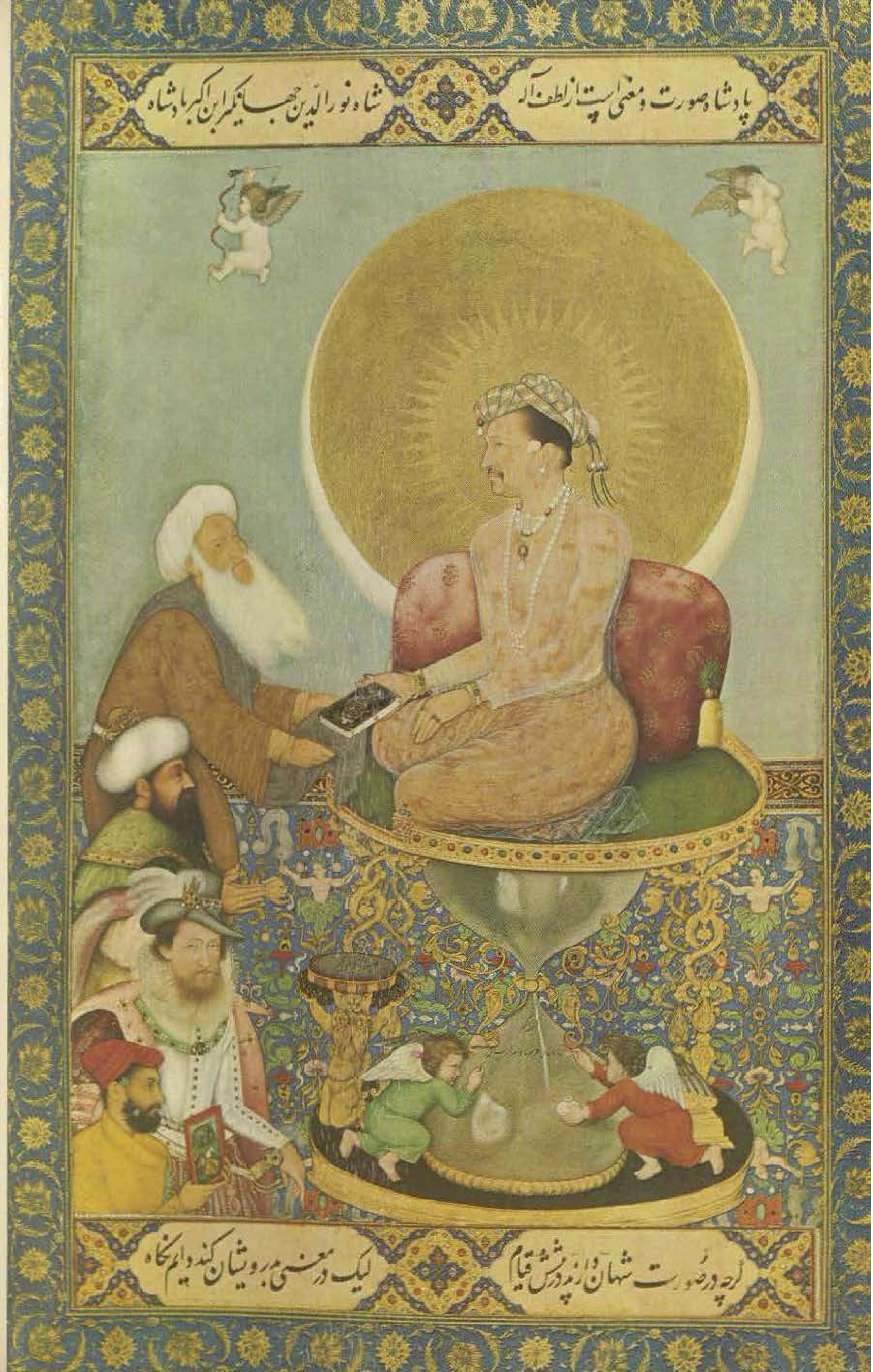
49. Encounter with a hermit in the wilderness. Mogul art, 1598–1599. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature from the *Rāmāyana* by Vālmīki. A lyrical narrative scene with a typically Indian feeling for nature.

50. Meeting of Jahāngīr with Shāh Abbās. Mogul art, 1620. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature of the school of Jahāngīr. The composition has been carefully balanced: the two seated figures are flanked below by two courtiers offering gifts. Note the accurate treatment of the fruits and objects.

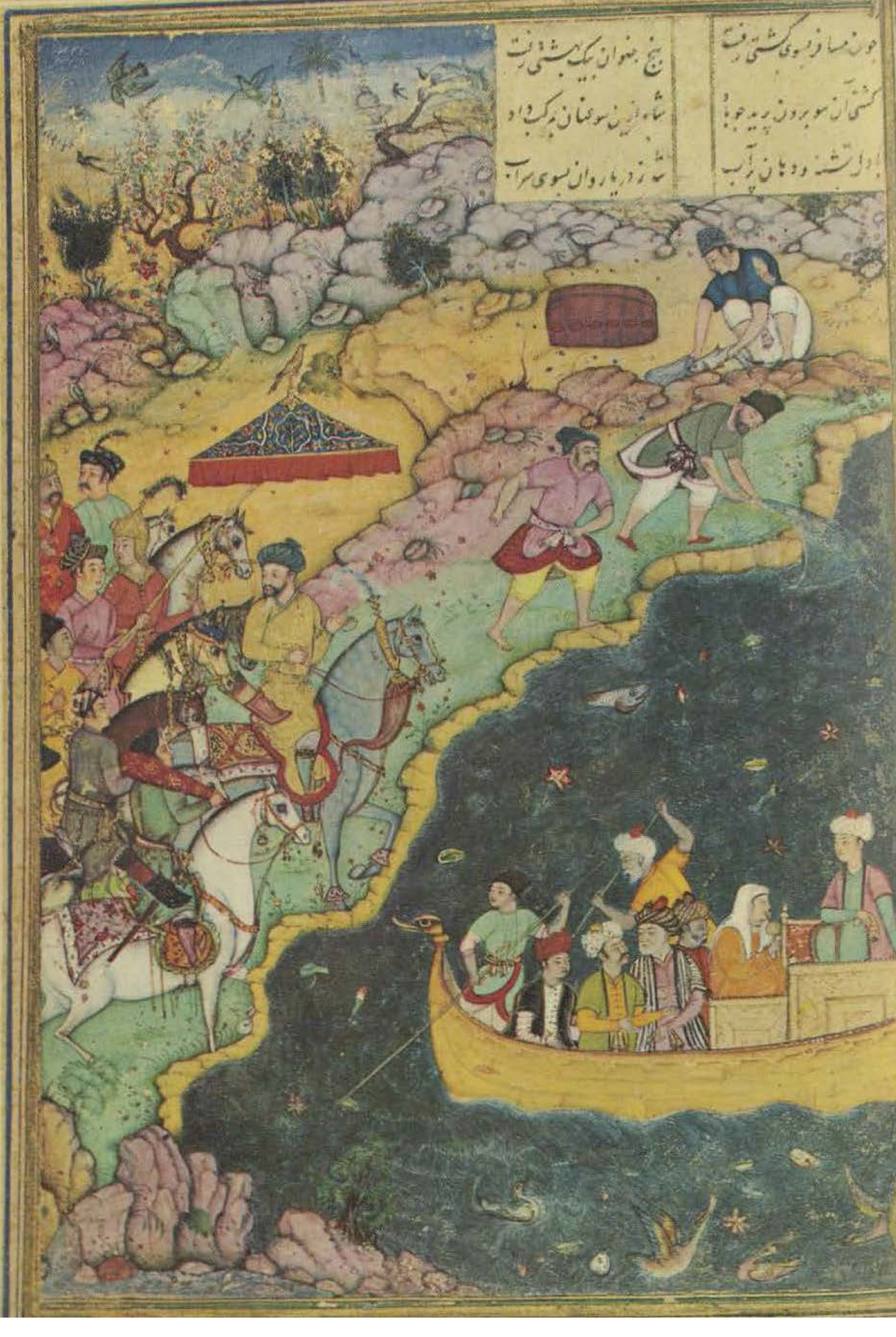
51. Allegorical portrait of Jahāngīr. Mogul art, 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature of the school of Jahāngīr. Signed by Bichitr. Jahāngīr is shown seated on a throne shaped like an hour-glass and talking with a mullah. Below, on the left, the figures of the Sultan of Turkey, James I of England and a Hindu. The scene displays the compositional talent of the artist, who has heightened his picture with gold and bright colours.

52. Illustration for an episode of the poem 'The Nine Paradises', from the *Khamsah* by Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī, a Persian poet (1253–1325). Mogul art, 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature of the school of Jahāngīr, displaying strong Iranian influences despite the artist's attempt to compose a detailed landscape which might indicate that he was a Mogul painter.

51. Allegorical portrait of Jahāngīr. Mogul art, 17th century.



پادشاه صورت و معنی است از لطف اله
شاه نور الدین جهانگیر ابن اکبر پادشاه
گرچه در صورت شهان دارند درپیشش قیام
لیک در معنی بر درویشان کند دایم نگاه


چون مسافر سوی کشتی رفت
پنج عنوان بیک کشتی رفت
کشتی آن سو برون پرید چو باد
شاه ازین سو عنان بر کب داد
او دل تشنه و دهان پر آب
شه ز دریا روان بسوی سراب

in prison by Aurangzeb, who was obliged to kill him before he could ascend the throne with any semblance of legitimacy. Mannucci then devoted his life to fighting against the forces of Aurangzeb in an attempt to avenge his friend.

With this last flash of brilliance, Mogul miniature painting began its slow process of decline. Although there were still some works of exceptional worth in the first half of the 18th century, when artists made elegant and fluent use of European perspective (although always in conjunction with Indian notions of composition) in a few famous masterpieces, the splendour of the school was waning and finally disappeared amid dull repetitions of themes and compositions that had been exploited to exhaustion in the period of the great emperors. But even this painting had succeeded in integrating the techniques and styles of three great civilisations: Persian, Indian and European

It would be a grave mistake to consider this brilliant page in the history of Indian art as being the product of a mechanical fusion, since the artists who wrote it had completely succeeded in dominating the foreign elements in their art. Although they learned to paint according to the teachings of the Persians, and derived their ornamental sense and graceful renderings of figures from that country, it was from Europe that they learned harmony of composition and a figurative liberty assured by the richness of a technique of pictorial illusion, and they succeeded in

52. Illustration for an episode of the poem 'The Nine Paradises', from the *Khamsah* by Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī, a Persian poet (1253–1325). Mogul art, 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

harmoniously combining all these various elements. From the beginning, Indian art had succeeded in assimilating various teachings, transforming them into new blood for an art that remained Indian from the start, even if it did sometimes show the prevalence of one or another source of inspiration. The last phase of the period saw the partial re-emergence of the ancient school of Indian miniature painting, for example in the portrait of a young Gujarāt woman, executed during the reign of Aurangzeb. It was almost as though all the experience accumulated in the great years of imperial splendour had disappeared to reveal the existence of a basic style that local traditions had kept alive. Although the portrait belonged to the Mogul school in time and place, it was really a revival of the Gujarāt style enlivened by new and vital elements. Moreover, although the adoration of Śiva in the form of a phallus, a work by Fateh Chand in the last quarter of the 18th century, showed traditional Indian characteristics in the composition of the trees, and European influences in the perspective and receding landscape of a mountain pass, it did demonstrate that the figurative experience of the Mogul school had also been used for Hindu themes—something which would have been unthinkable a few years earlier. This might also have been the remote effect of the reactions provoked by the intolerant orthodoxy of Aurangzeb, who considered painters to be 'workers of the devil' even though he did permit his familiars and courtiers to

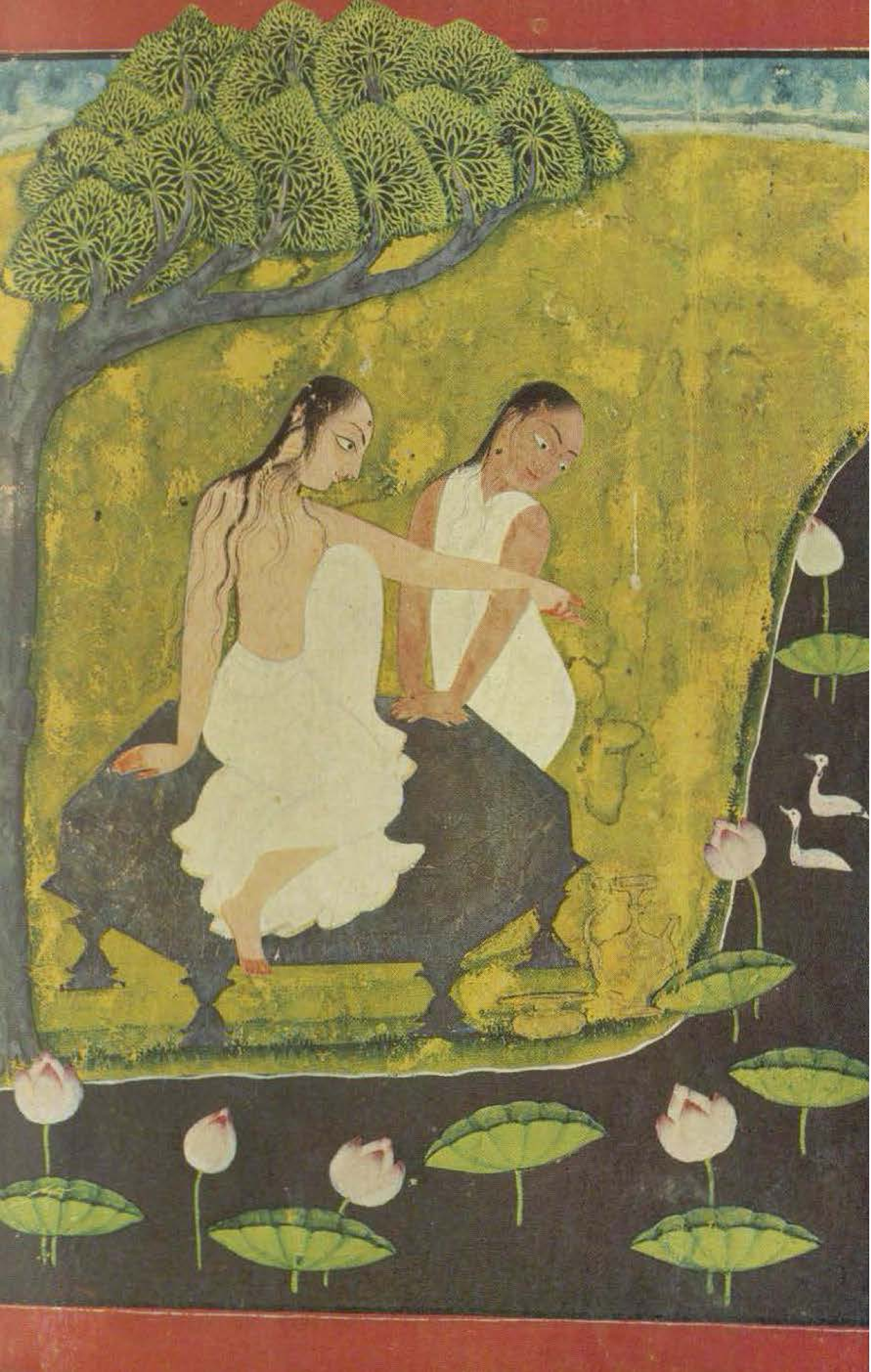
take them privately into their service. His successors preferred to make different use of the riches at their disposal, and the new patrons of painting were the provincial governors, the Hindu sovereigns and the implacable enemies of the decadent Mogul regime.

It was only logical that all the most vital elements of style should pass, together with the artists themselves, into a more favourable environment in which such works were sure to be appreciated. This was yet another reason why miniature painting, like other arts, appeared to be chaotic and confused especially in the second half of the 18th century. It is difficult to study with necessary objectivity because of the tenacious persistence of preconceived ideas and curious prejudices even among specialists. The same situation recurs, with evident variations, when we examine the currents of Indo-Moslem art contemporary with the rise of the Mogul school. Even if it did occupy first place in miniature painting, together with the less refined but perhaps more spontaneous and clearly Indian Rajput school, it was by no means the only great school. That of Deccan, which centred around the states of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda (the great centre of the Indian diamond market) appears ill defined and vague in character when subjected to genuine critical scrutiny, because of the difficulty of making any precise identification of the works belonging to it, except for one small group. As far as its general character goes, all we can say is that it shows differences from the Mogul



53. Krishna enthroned, with shepherdesses. Baśohli art, c. 1710. British Museum, London.

54. Young women on the banks of a pond. Rajput art, 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.



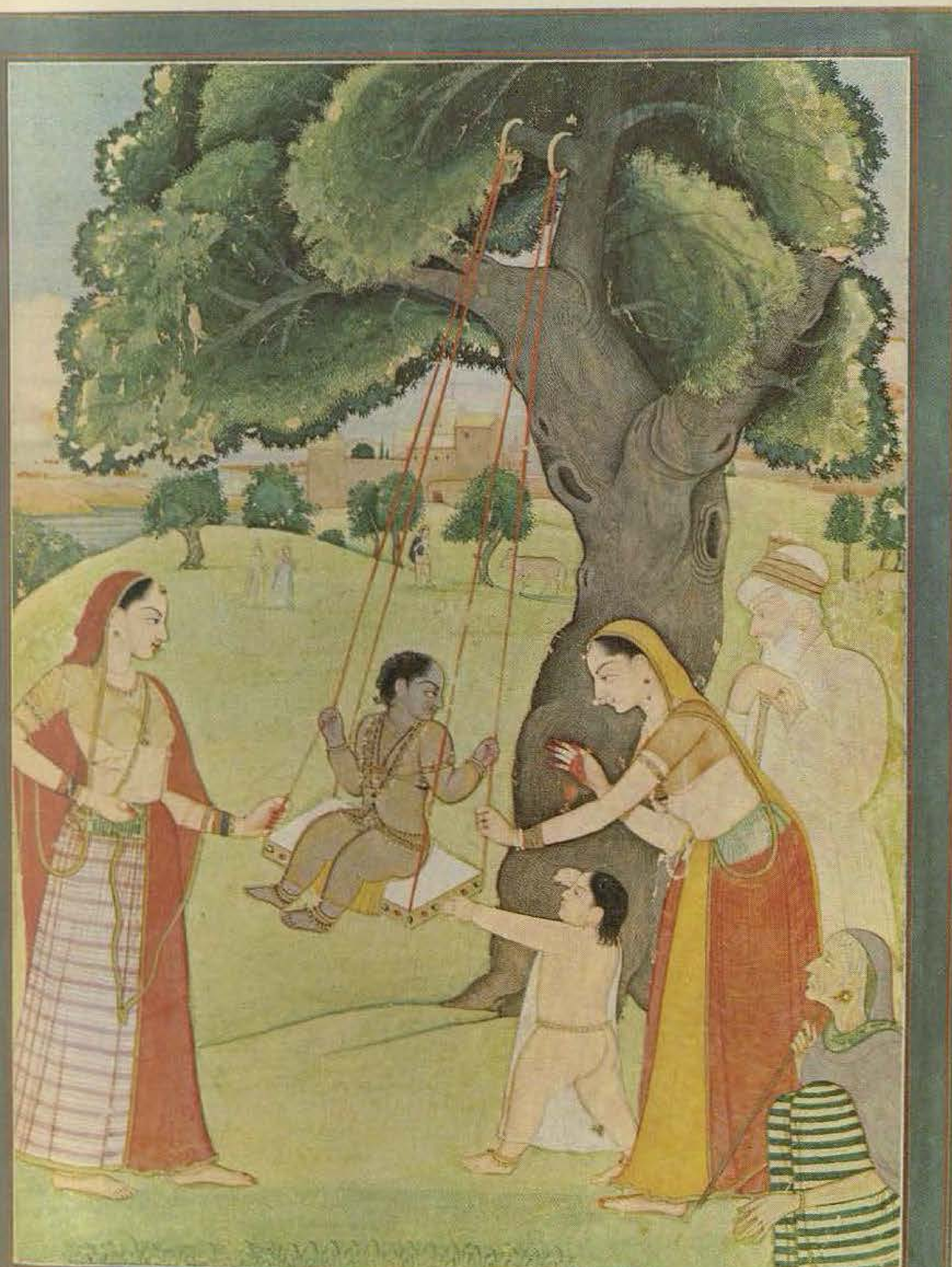
53. Krishna enthroned, with shepherdesses. Baśohli art, *c.* 1710. British Museum, London. Although the figures are stiff, the lines are soft and the colours are colder. The miniature, which suggests a scene in the forest, illustrates the evolution of the school towards its decadent phase. The trees, resembling enormous flowers, reveal the unknown artist's gift for stylisation.

54. Young women on the banks of a pond. Rajput art, 17th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature in the Pahāri style of Baśohli. An elegant composition which exploits the lotuses and water in the foreground to emphasise the figures under a bent pine tree. A genre scene on the whole, with the semi-naked young girl throwing food to the two geese.

55. Krishna on the swing. Guler art, 1750–1760. British Museum, London. The scene, with its spacious and almost European landscape, is dominated by the powerful tree to which the swing is attached. An old man, an old woman, two young women and another child stand around the young Krishna.

56. Foretelling a hurricane. Guler art. 1750–1760. British Museum, London. Two figures standing on a terrace with a European-style balustrade under a greying sky are listening to the first claps of thunder and feeling the first rain drops. Their dance-like gestures, perfect, delicate profiles, and the finely rendered details complete this strange and lovely composition, which conveys a sense of fantasy. The highly coloured dress of the women suggests a rainbow.

55. Krishna on the swing. Guler art, 1750–1760.





school, both in its predilection for rigid, stylised, and to a certain extent decorative forms in a more obviously Indian style, and in the way it created high-priced works with a particular technique, their value being stressed by a lavish use of gold paint. Such works were effective enough and seemed to favour a stylistic compromise between Islamic aesthetic requirements, preferred by the local sovereigns, and the eternally reflowering Indian figurative tradition. Because of their Turkish ancestry the Deccan sovereigns maintained contacts and links with Ottoman Turkey for reasons which seem to have been partly political, unlike the Moguls who seem to have been linked to Persia.

Another factor which influenced the school was the interest shown by some kings in music. As a result, one of the most popular pictorial genres was the Rāgmālā (garlands of Rāga) which had as its theme 'the poetic traditions of melodic modes' (rāga) which Jeanine Auboyer considered to be 'a very artificial Indian form of the so-called "music painting" which can also be found in other schools'. In any case, interest in music predominated in this area as may be seen from the portrait of Ibrahim II, Shāh Adil of Bijapur (1580–1626), painted in about 1615: the sovereign, a noted music-lover and composer, is represented with the *kurtar*, the bicoloured castanets that were used by musicians as a kind of rudimentary metronome. The cultural climate was quite different from that of the Moguls, and it was

56. Foretelling a hurricane. Guler art, 1750–1760. British Museum, London.

reflected in a figurative art which was less powerful and vital though it kept its independence even when the imperial school was at its apogee.

There is no doubt that Bijapur had its own great school of portrait painters who were able to create a particular type of portrait. That of Ibrahim II, with his gauze vestments flowing in the wind and his gold-thread scarf and shawl, is sufficient proof. The sovereign is standing against a background that is partly composed of plants and partly of architecture (detail of a palace painted in the European manner), with lotus flowers at his feet. The exotic plants, the splendour of the costume and the lively, baroque structure of the whole composition, are confirmation of the independence of the school which proved the validity of its style by the very fact of maintaining its autonomy. The style also succeeded in influencing one of the most famous Rajput schools, that of Bikaner, which oscillated between the Mogul and the Deccan styles. Most of the works produced at Golconda by the school that prospered under the local sovereigns, the Kutub-Shāhi, were lost when the Moguls destroyed Hyderabad, the cultural centre of the state. The few surviving works and various rather late miniatures that were imported into Europe show strong analogies with the styles and the aims of the Bijapur school.

The Rajput school represented a fairly widespread movement which was strictly Indian in character and, to a certain extent, opposed to all Muslim art in



57. Lady listening to music. Guler art, 1750. British Museum, London.



58. Krishna holding up Mount Govardhān to protect his friends from a hurricane. Bikaner art, *c.* 1690. British Museum, London.

59. Portrait of a man. Mogul art, first half of the 17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.



57. Lady listening to music. Guler art, 1750. British Museum, London. The scene is enlivened by the brilliant colouring of the background and the large carpet covering the terrace. The red baldaquin, the players' costumes and the flowering lily blossoms convey a serene sense of joyfulness even though the women's faces are dignified and almost cold, according to the Jammu style in which echoes of the Mogul style were adapted to the taste of the upper Punjab.

58. Krishna holding up Mount Govardhān to protect his friends from a hurricane. Bikaner art, *c.* 1690. British Museum, London. Miniature by Shahadin. Attention is focussed on the landscape of the mountain which serves as cover, on the green spiralling clouds with the monstrous elephant carrying Ingra, the king of the gods, and on the torrents of water gushing down from the uprooted mountain.

59. Portrait of a man. Mogul art, first half of the 17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. A typical portrait of the Mogul school. The characterisation of the profile is fairly pronounced and extremely realistic. The body is sketched with increasing lightness.

60. A nobleman and his family. Pahāri (Chambā) art, first half of the 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. The composition embraces the architectural details of a lordly mansion with a spacious garden enclosed by a thin line of trees. The un-scientific perspective is helped and simplified by the geometric elements in the design. The master of the house and his lady are both enjoying the perfumed savour of water pipes while accompanied by their maidservants.



60. A nobleman and his family. Pahāri (Chambā) art, first half of the 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

India. It owes its name to the valiant Rajput princes who resisted the Moslem advance and united or opposed their forces against those of the dominating Moguls. The Rajput race was descended from various Central Asian tribes who had intermarried with shepherds of the semi-desert Thar region, and it was the sole defender of the Indian world against the first waves of Moslem invaders from the north. Then, as always, the Rajput horsemen, paladins of a world that had for ever vanished, generously gave their blood and lives in a hopeless struggle, fighting with a courage bordering on madness, acting with loyalty, and honouring their vows as far as was humanly possible. This feudal community closed its ranks in the face of a society which they found unwelcome, kept their autonomy as far as possible, gave way only to the inevitable, fought only when necessary, and always behaved with exceptional nobility.

Rajput art was too spontaneous and free to be a court art. The miniature painter belonged to a corporation of craftsmen, was able to execute even mural paintings, and, perhaps, might even agree to paint scenes of domestic and palace life, without ever letting others know the secrets of an art which remained in the keeping of those who had inherited them from their forebears and who were bound to each other like members of a caste. Naturally, the subjects they preferred were not the same as those favoured by Mogul artists. Apart from representa-

tions of official scenes, portraits of noble lords and powerful sovereigns, Rajput painters dealt with scenes from everyday life, religious festivals and ceremonies, mythological subjects and, in particular, episodes from the legend of the hero and god Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu who was worshipped, as in a large part of contemporary India not under Moslem domination, in his aspect as Krishna Gopāla or else as the boy shepherd surrounded by his shepherdesses.

Despite its wealth of erotic undertones, the legend of Krishna contained rather forced symbolical meanings, transforming an amorous summons into the appeal of the divinity to the souls of men and women, but it inspired and still inspires great poets and writers as well as artists. By a strange coincidence this theme, which had been made hugely popular by the diffusion of the story of the loves of Krishna and Rādhā, symbolising the divinity and the soul, diffused a spirit and a mode that came extraordinarily close to those of Western 'pastorals' throughout India. To quote Ivan Stuchkin, the story of Krishna and Rādhā represented 'a perfect breviary for lovers prepared to cross the country of Tenderness' exactly as in *Astrée*. We need only think of the innumerable varieties of sentimental attitudes proposed by the story of Krishna and Rādhā, and those found in the loves of the god and the *gopī*, and the shepherdesses of Brindāban who made a crown for him, to understand why it was that the subject was so pleasing to

everyone and was practically inexhaustible. It could serve for the most varied purposes, from those that were deeply religious to those that were plainly sentimental and erotic; from psychological studies to genre scenes. The feminine element predominated in it, amid surroundings that were rustic, idyllic and pastoral. It seems strange that the Rajputs laid such stress on these rather sugary aspects of a somewhat superficial religious form, so alien to their heroic, cavalier-like behaviour.

In its general lines, Rajput miniature painting, partly a derivation from the school of Gujarāt, was mostly based on drawing, although its use of colour often showed independent attempts at innovation. It may be divided into two principal branches, that of Rājputāna or so-called Rājasthāni miniatures, and that of the Himalayan school which was given the name of *Pahāri* or 'montagnard'. The 'montagnard' branch extended through most of the Punjab, the region of the 'five rivers' around the upper course of the Indus. Both branches included a notable variety of schools and local styles which are sometimes too small to be considered as stylistic and figurative trends in their own right. But it is possible to distinguish several great centres that played an undoubtedly important part in the evolution of Rajput painting. Although it often gave rise to forms and compositions that would have been inconceivable in Mogul art, many students regard it as a relatively autonomous variant of Mogul painting.

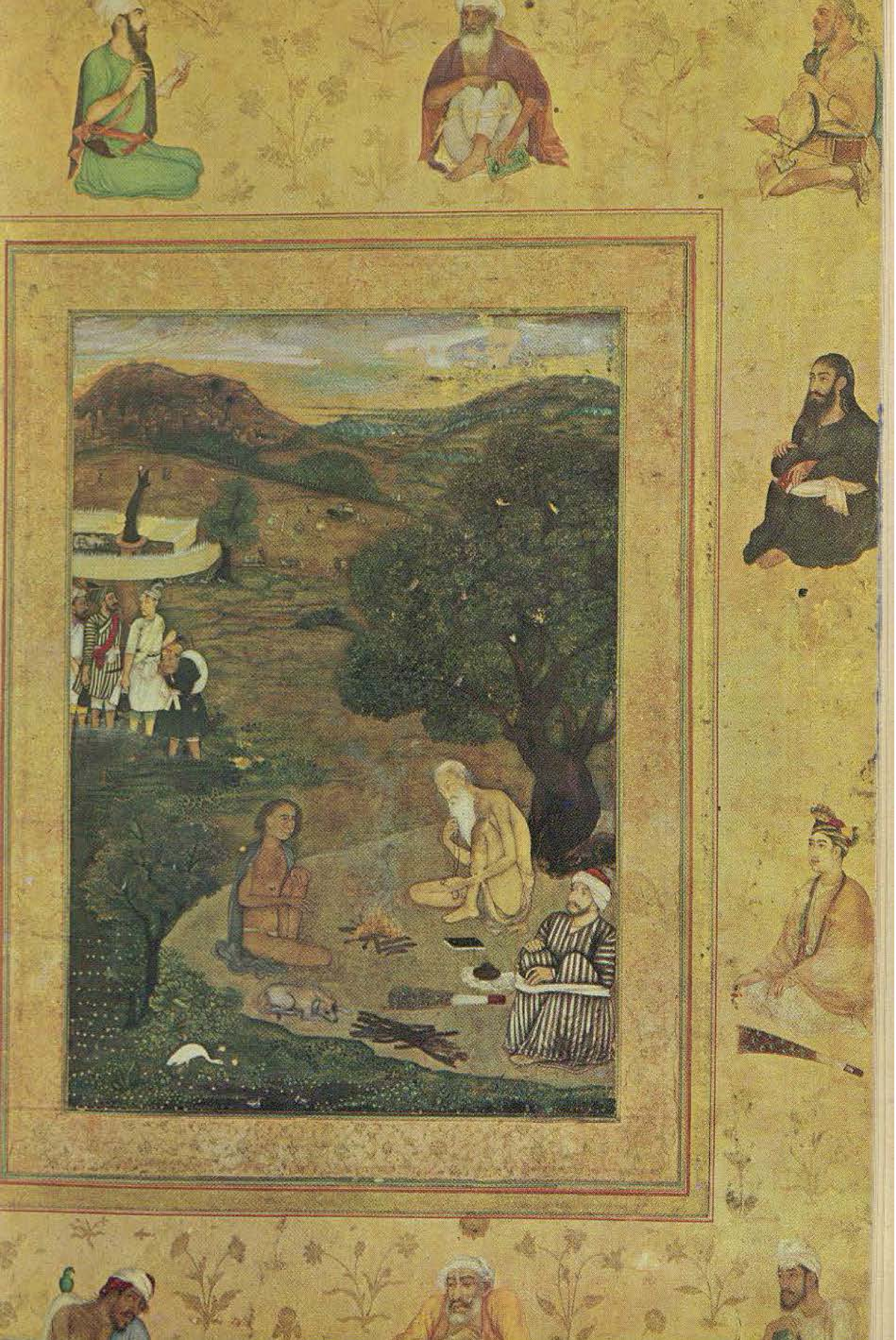
61. Symbolic figure of a woman holding a stringed instrument. Mogul art, 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.



62. Maharata horseman. Provincial Mogul art, early 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

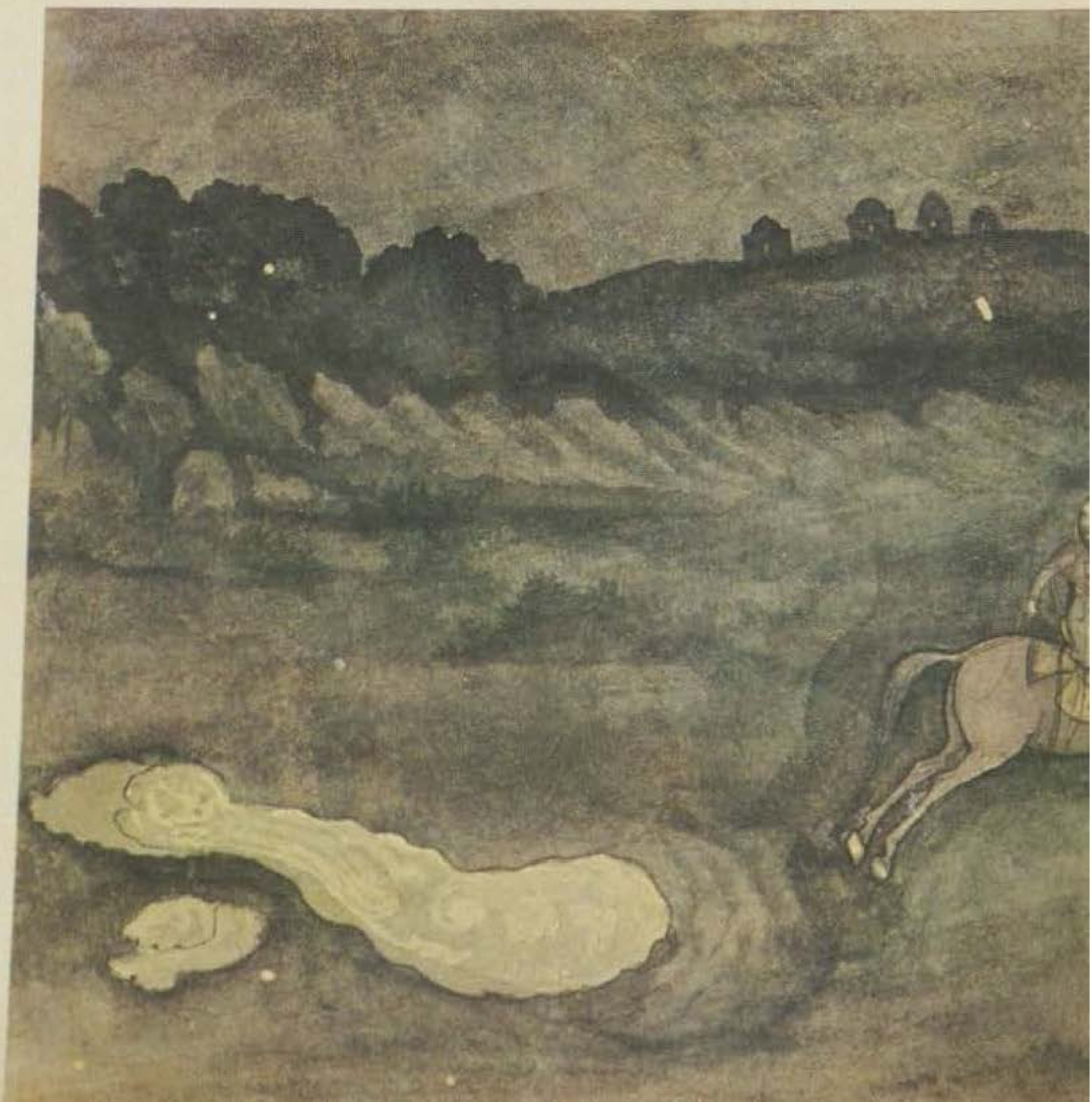
63. Visit to a holy man. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.





61. Symbolic figure of a woman holding a stringed instrument. Mogul art, 16th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. The painting, signed by Basāwan, shows that the artist had carefully studied Western prints. Not only are the draperies and reliefs rendered in chiaroscuro, but the mask on which the figure is standing is further evidence of the European element in the work.

62. Maharata horseman. Provincial Mogul art, early 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. Note the elegant stylisation of the horse and the portrait-like realism of the rider's face. The miniature fauna and tiny hunters in the hills below give a gigantic appearance to the main figure.



63. Visit to a holy man. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. Miniature of the reign of Shāh Jahān, mounted with a border bearing figures of masters and holy men alternating with flower and plant motifs. The Hindu ascetics sitting by the ritual fire under the tree contrast with the noblemen preparing to cross a ford.

64. Mythological scene concerning the personification of the planet Mercury. Provincial Mogul art, second half of the 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. This composition is rather exceptional for the provincial Mogul school of miniature painting. The isolated figure in the vast landscape corresponds to a spiritual attitude alien to Indian thought.

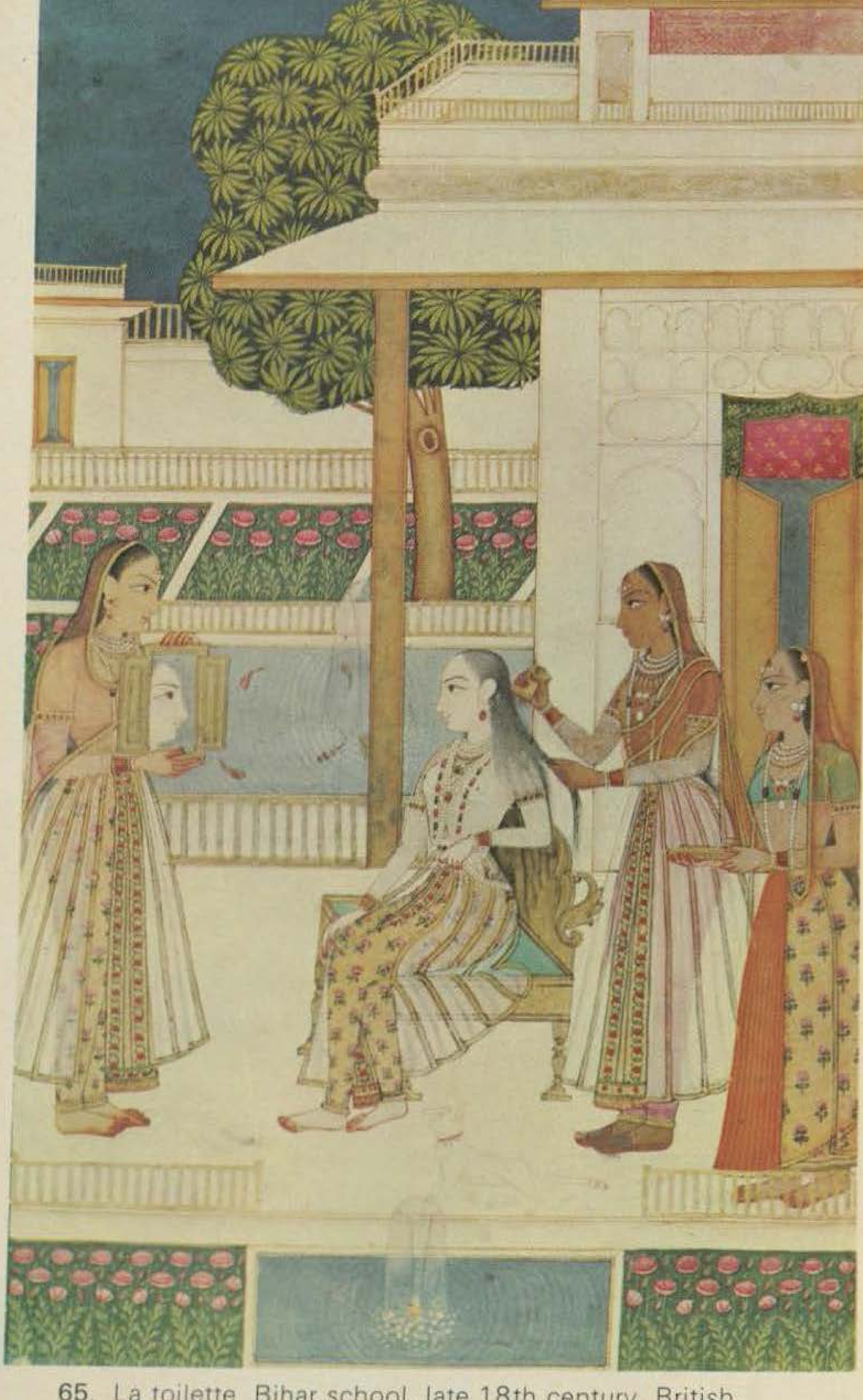


Where they have made distinctions, these have been based on content and subject-matter rather than form.

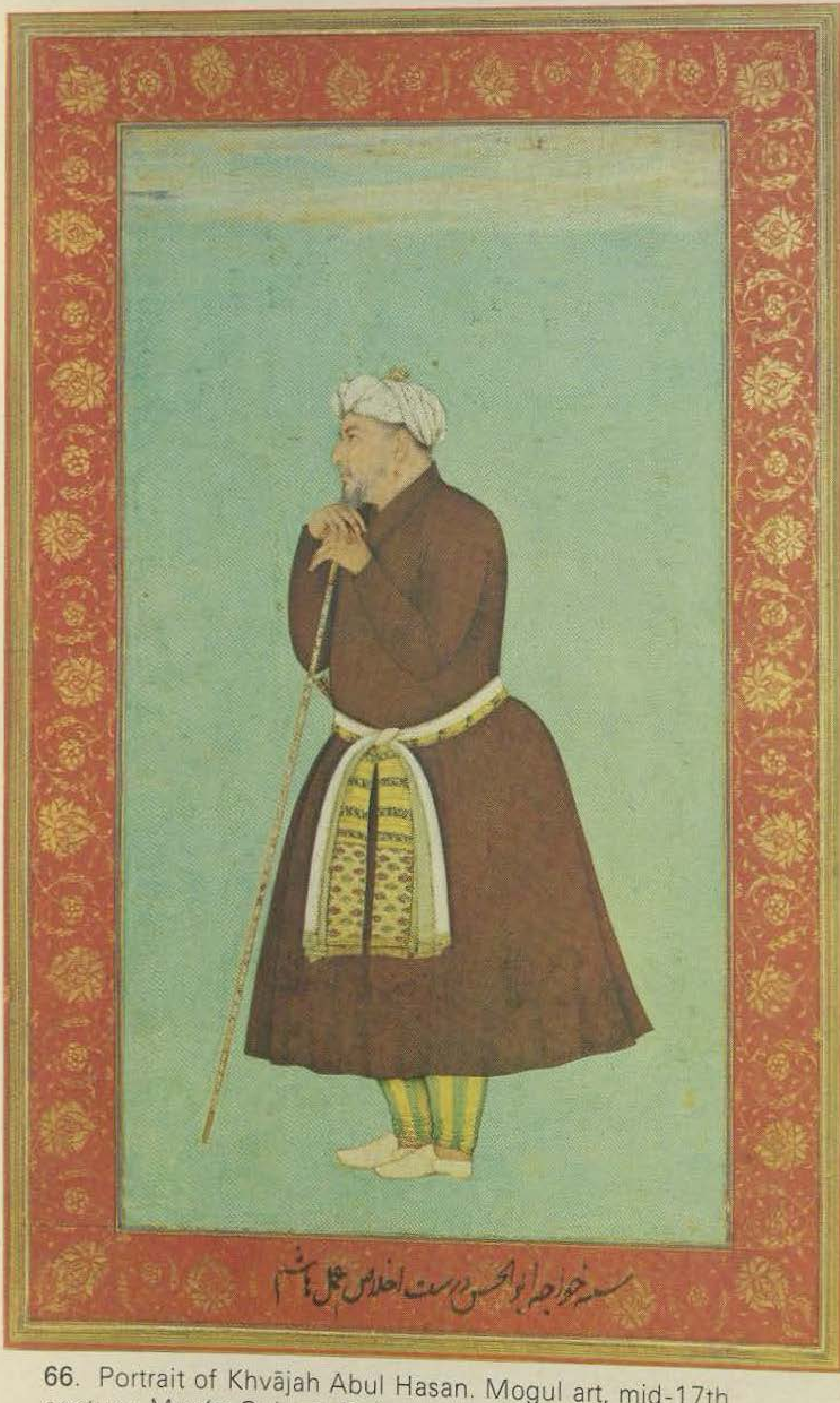
Rajput painting has been called religious although it included openly profane works quite as numerous as those which belonged to the traditional cult of the divinity, and the term profane art has been used for Mogul art to stress its narrative and commemorative aspects. But this division has now been rendered largely obsolete and has no real justification. Inasmuch as Mogul miniature painting influenced both branches of Rajput painting, the characteristic forms of the two schools were almost antithetical, if only because the Rajput school was rarely interested in creating the illusion of relief. Being born out of the two-dimensional painting of the Gujarāt school, it remained faithful to the two-dimensional principle despite variations of schools, sub-schools and tendencies. On the other hand, the difference in subject matter is quite aleatory since, even when artists were treating avowedly religious or legendary scenes, the more or less mythical subject depicted often offered a glimpse of Indian life or had sentimental and psychological undertones which, even if they did not contradict the religious intentions of the work, did at least reduce them to such an earthly dimension that the division of paintings by subject matter no longer held good. With this rather polemical premise in mind we may concede that, even when the reciprocal influence was prevalent, it

is hard enough to distinguish between Rajput and Mogul works. But it is not absolutely impossible since certain minor technical details, such as in the drawing or the costumes, can indicate a reliable way of making distinctions.

The Rājasthāni branch became fragmented into various main schools. That of Mewar, which had a principal centre at Udaipur as well as other minor centres, spread throughout the whole state and had its own character because of the diffusion of the teachings of a particular Vishnu-worshipping sect. Above all, it was characterised by artists who all differed from one another to some extent. Some used acid and strident colours while others favoured warmer and softer tones. Their works may be judged in various, contradictory ways by different experts with different views, but we must admit that, even when they varied in quality, they always had a naïve freshness which often placed them on a very high level. To condemn such works would be rather like condemning the works of Douanier Rousseau. But the school of Malva, from which the ancient Pahāri styles were derived, was more closely linked to the Gujarāt school and was less well defined geographically since it spread throughout surrounding regions, bringing with it a barbaric sense of joyful colouring, rhythmic and strongly spatial compositions and, especially, a tendency to give male faces heavy and sullen features. As for the school of Bikaner, it was a typical example of the way in which an original local



65. La toilette. Bihar school, late 18th century. British Museum, London.



66. Portrait of Khvājah Abul Hasan. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

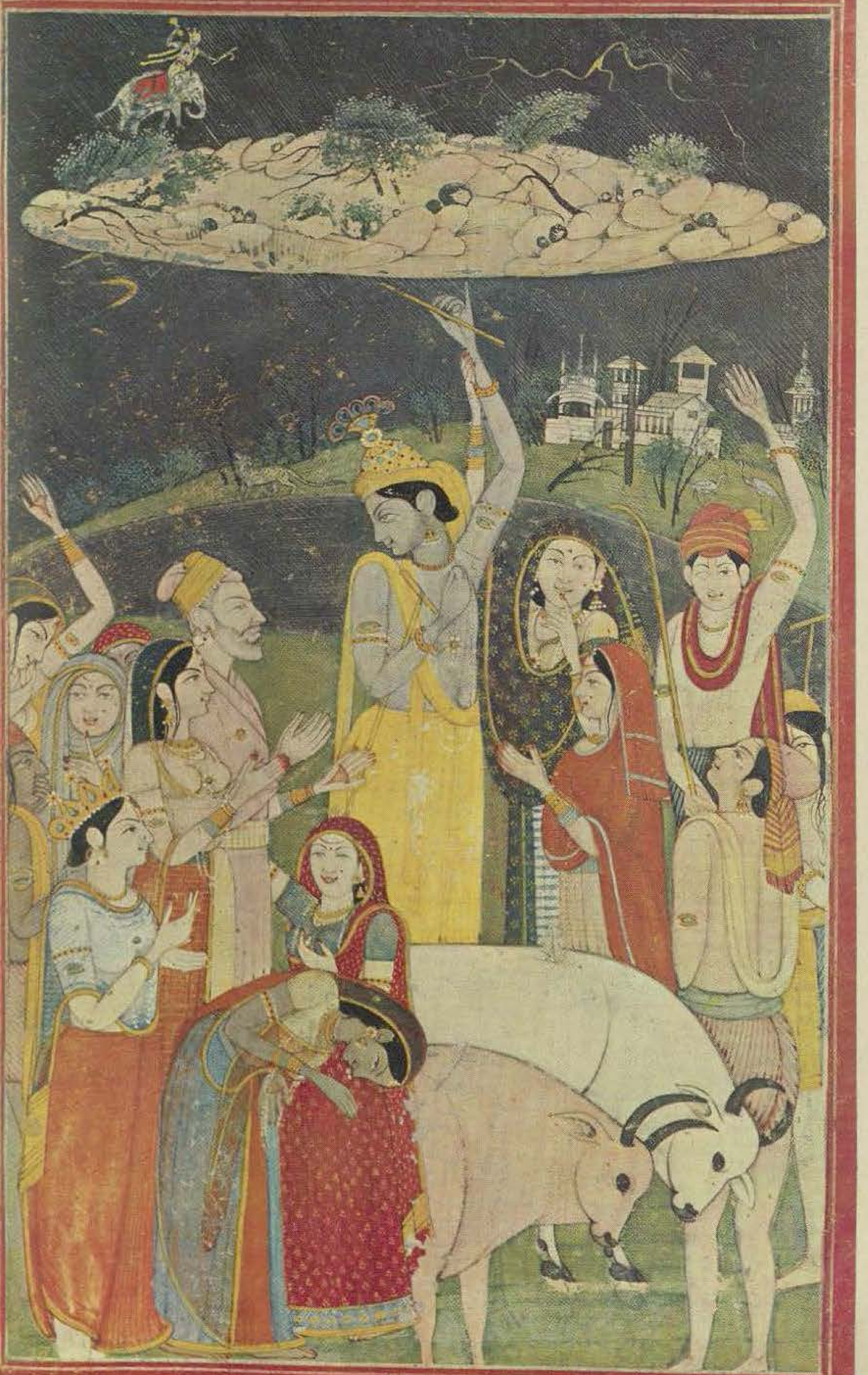
65. La toilette. Bihar school, late 18th century. British Museum, London. A lady on a verandah is complacently examining herself in a mirror while her maid combs her hair. The evanescent cat, the flowers, fish in the pool and the way gushing water is represented all give a special tone to the miniature.

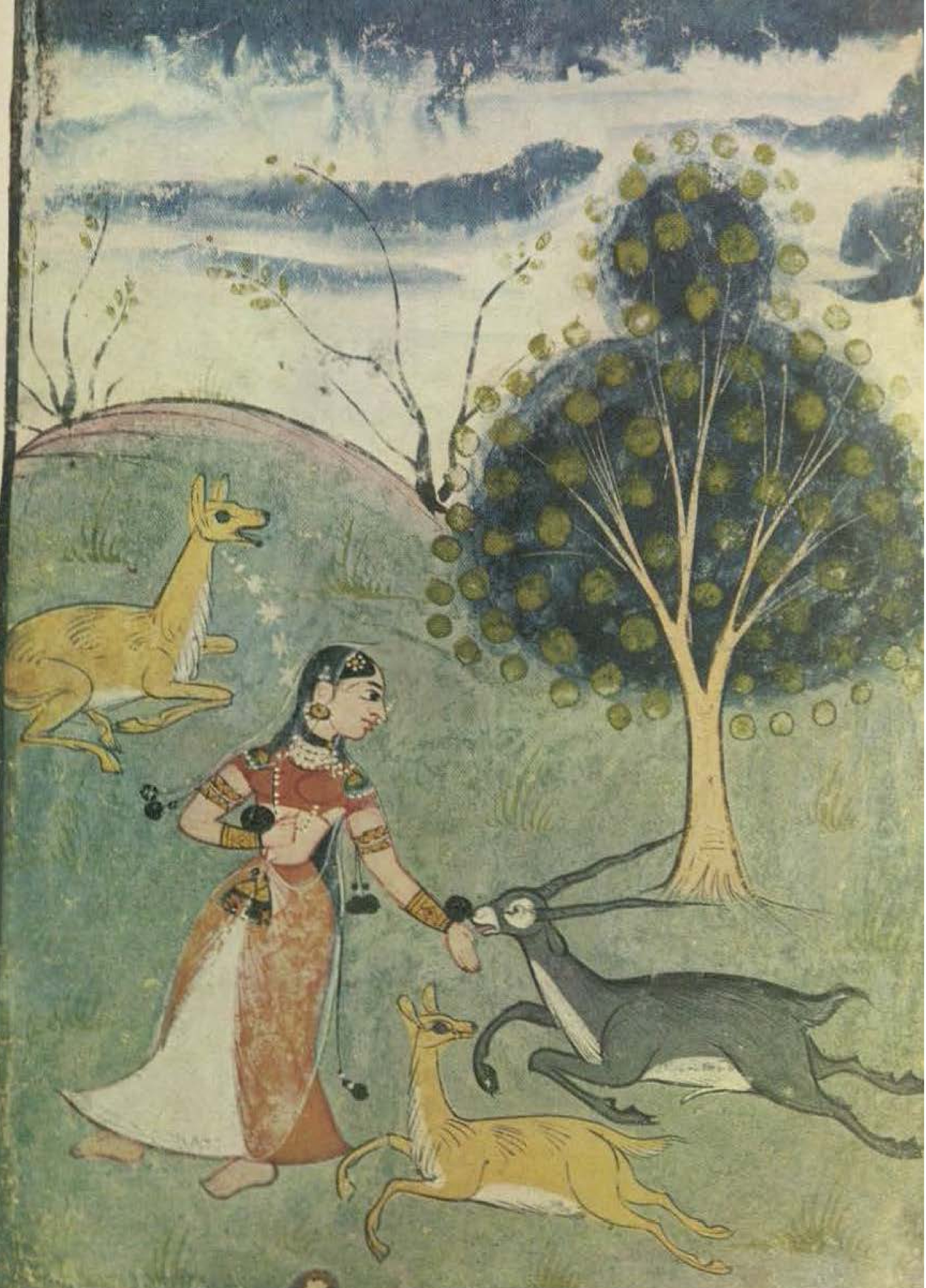
66. Portrait of Khvājah Abul Hasan. Mogul art, mid-17th century. Musée Guimet, Paris. Painted by Hāshim (during the reign of Shāh Jahān). A classical Mogul portrait of a dignitary leaning on the staff which is the sign of his rank. The hard features and penetrating glance of the old man are particularly striking while his sober coloured costume, enlivened by a coloured scarf, has almost become a simple patch of abstract colour.

67. Krishna holding up Mount Govardhān. Rajput art, 18th–19th century. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. By courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Miniature in the Pahāri style of the Garhwāl. The work is by Molarām, the greatest of the Garhwāl painters, who was active between 1760 and 1823. The composition is strongly decorative and uses profiles, full face and three-quarter profiles in what is probably a memory of Mogul art. The overall effect is one of stiffness but the composition is enlivened by skilful colouring.

68. Rāginī Todi. Rajput art, mid- to late 17th century. Johnson Album XLIII, folio 20, India Office Library, London. The miniature may belong to the Bundi school. It represents a girl taming the wild animals who come running towards her. The patchwork style is only seemingly naïve, for with its brilliant and varied colouring it succeeds in creating a pleasing and almost elegant composition.

67. Krishna holding up Mount Govardhān. Rajput art, 18th–19th century.





68. Rāginī Todī. Rajput art, mid- to late 17th century.
Johnson Album XLIII, folio 20, India Office Library, London.

pictorial style could be almost entirely suffocated by political and cultural relations with nearby states and schools through a lack of great artistic personalities of its own and sufficient cultural and social foundation for it to evolve independently.

But that a local style and talent did exist is proved by the painting of Krishna holding up Mount Govardhān to protect his shepherd friends, their herds, and two *gopī* from a hurricane of cosmic proportions. A work by one of the major painters, Shahadin, who was active at the end of the 17th century, it is a fantastic yet balanced composition with a wealth of detail rendered with occasional great skill and ingenuity. Above all, it is a distinctive work and it suggests a stylistic evolution that had been partly suppressed and lost.

The school of Amber, one of the largest of the Rājasthān, was almost miraculously born out of the same concert of circumstances that had killed the school of Bikaner. A greater sense of balance and the keen sense of nature of some artists, and the indirect encouragement given by a young warrior and poet-prince who fell in love with a talented female singer who was in his mother-in-law's suite, probably all contributed to the creation of a little series of masterpieces, all indisputably superior in quality to those of Mogul painting of that time (the first half of the 18th century). Besides the school of Amber, mention should also be made of the schools of Bundelkhand, Marwar, Bundi and the minor

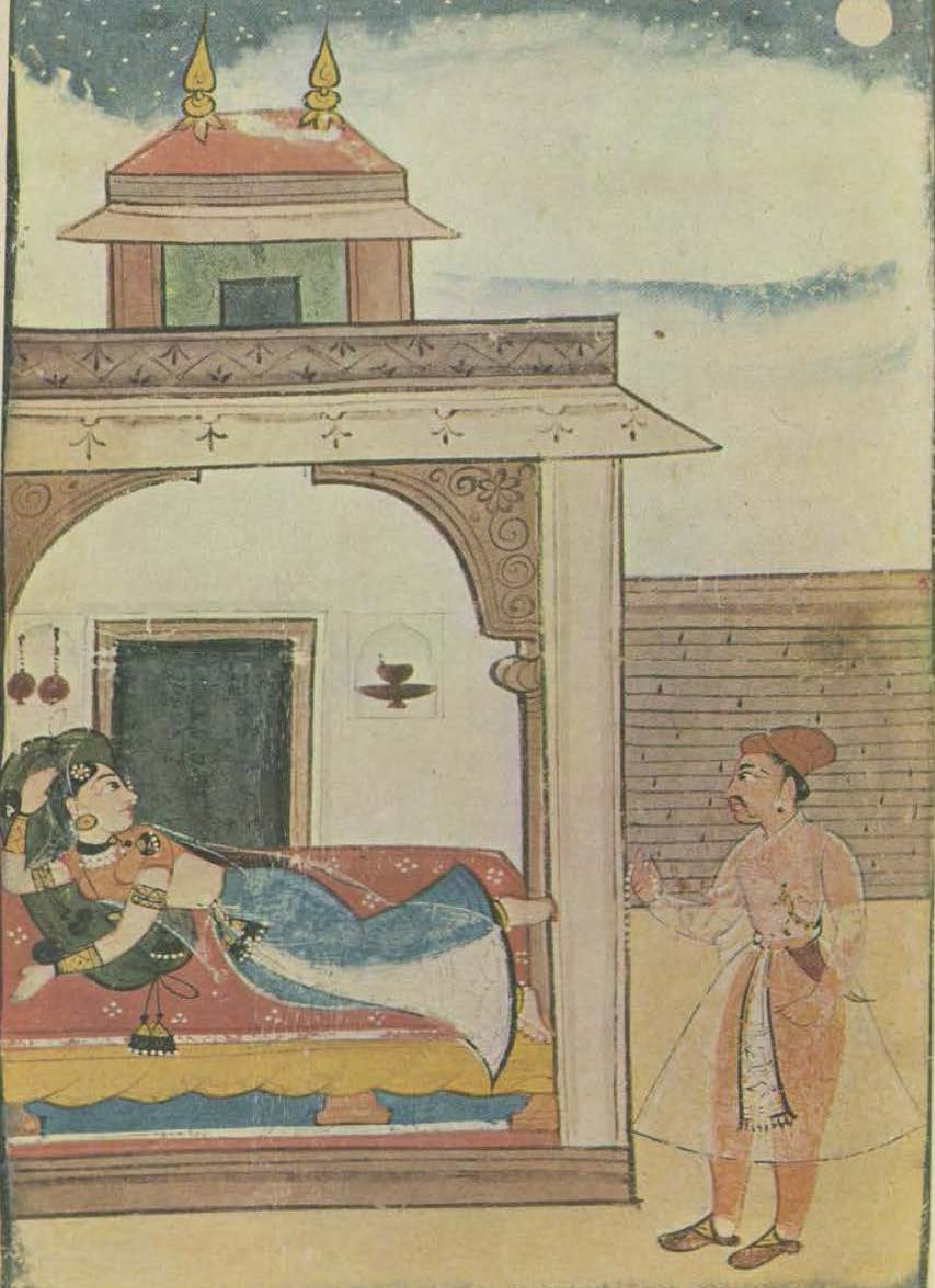
school of Bihar, which was not really Rajput and which produced some fine works at the close of the 18th century. In all these schools the process of evolution, which produced different and sometimes excellent styles, was analogous to that of the Rājasthāni branch and might be summed up as a continuous dialogue and contrast with the Mogul school.

As for the 'montagnard' school of the upper Punjab, although it had undergone a different evolution since, in its last phase, it had been influenced by the presence of the Sikh confederations and their subsequent transition to an organised state and a nation (a political–social factor of the first importance), it was subdivided into forty schools and sub-schools which are often simply labels for the more convenient cataloguing of small groups of works. Traditional critics mostly concentrate on the centres at Baśohli, active between the 16th and 18th centuries and which went from an archaising phase to a period of strong Mogul influence that was soon overcome, thus opening the way for a truly 'montagnard' school—Jammu, Guler, and Kāngrā. Apart from the presence of a few exiled Mogul painters at Guler and the consequent transformation in local style, none of these centres showed a coherent evolution that could be followed in time.

Rather than 'schools' we should consider these centres as the focal points for various currents in art which would change, increase in importance or disappear according to the prevalence of one or another

stylistic tendency which might be due to the presence by chance of some artists of genius who had found a valid way of renewing past styles, or to some occasional contact which brought about a change in traditional formulas. We might say that this lively and romantic school of 'montagnard' painting, which was sometimes of a very high quality, is still waiting for a precise critical evaluation to clarify its history and give it the rank it deserves—a rank certainly far above that of mere folk art which has sometimes been assigned to it.

There was, it is true, a latent rebellion against a dominant figurative culture which might have stifled it, but besides the fact that the two cultures in question were rooted in different soils and had almost antithetical social and political systems, that its own style was never stifled should be more than enough to show that it was more than mere folk art. Moreover, the skilful drawing of the 'two Sikh noblemen', the refined composition of the Gangāvatavara (the descent of the goddess of the Ganges), or lastly, the illustration to the *Utkā Nāyikā* (young girl awaiting her lover) which is a variation on the theme of the loves of Krishna and Rādhā, is sufficient proof of the full autonomy and validity of the so-called Kāngrā school which may be difficult to define exactly but which showed itself to be animated by a clear artistic determination, a refined taste, and great technical skill.



69. Rāgini Lalita. Rajput art, mid- or late 17th century. Johnson Album XLIII, folio 4, India Office Library, London.

70. Krishna and Rādhā playing. Jaipur art, late 18th century. Johnson Album XXXVII, folio 5, India Office Library, London.



69. Rāginī Lalita. Rajput art, mid- or late 17th century. Johnson Album XLIII, folio 4, India Office Library, London. Perhaps a miniature of the Bundi school. The *rāginī*, a pictorial expression of musical themes, represents a genre of unknown origin which only flourished after the Moguls. In this instance, a lover visiting his beloved at night.

70. Krishna and Rādhā playing. Jaipur art, late 18th century. Johnson Album XXXVII, folio 5, India Office Library, London. Apart from the large carpet, the perspective is strictly scientific and of European derivation. It is helped by the prevalence of simple architectural elements.

71. Two Sikh noblemen: scene of a visit with the two characters rendered as portraits. Sikh school, late 18th–early 19th century. British Museum, London. A typical composition combining echoes of the styles of the northern provincial schools, re-elaborated in a style with a predilection for thick, strongly decorative, undulating lines.

72. Episode in the legend of the goddess of the Ganges, Gangāvatarana. School of Kāngrā, late 18th century. Johnson Album XXXIV, folio 4, India Office Library, London. The artist was Udūt Singh Musavir. The goddess is shown with Śiva, and the snake is a sign of the presence of the *māga*, snake-spirits of the waters. The elephant skin has symbolic value also.

73. Utkā Nāyikā: girl waiting for her lover. School of Kāngrā, late 18th century. British Museum, London. Sitting in an idyllic landscape between trees which form the background, the girl is covering her gentle and beautiful features again after having momentarily lifted her veil to look anxiously for her lover.

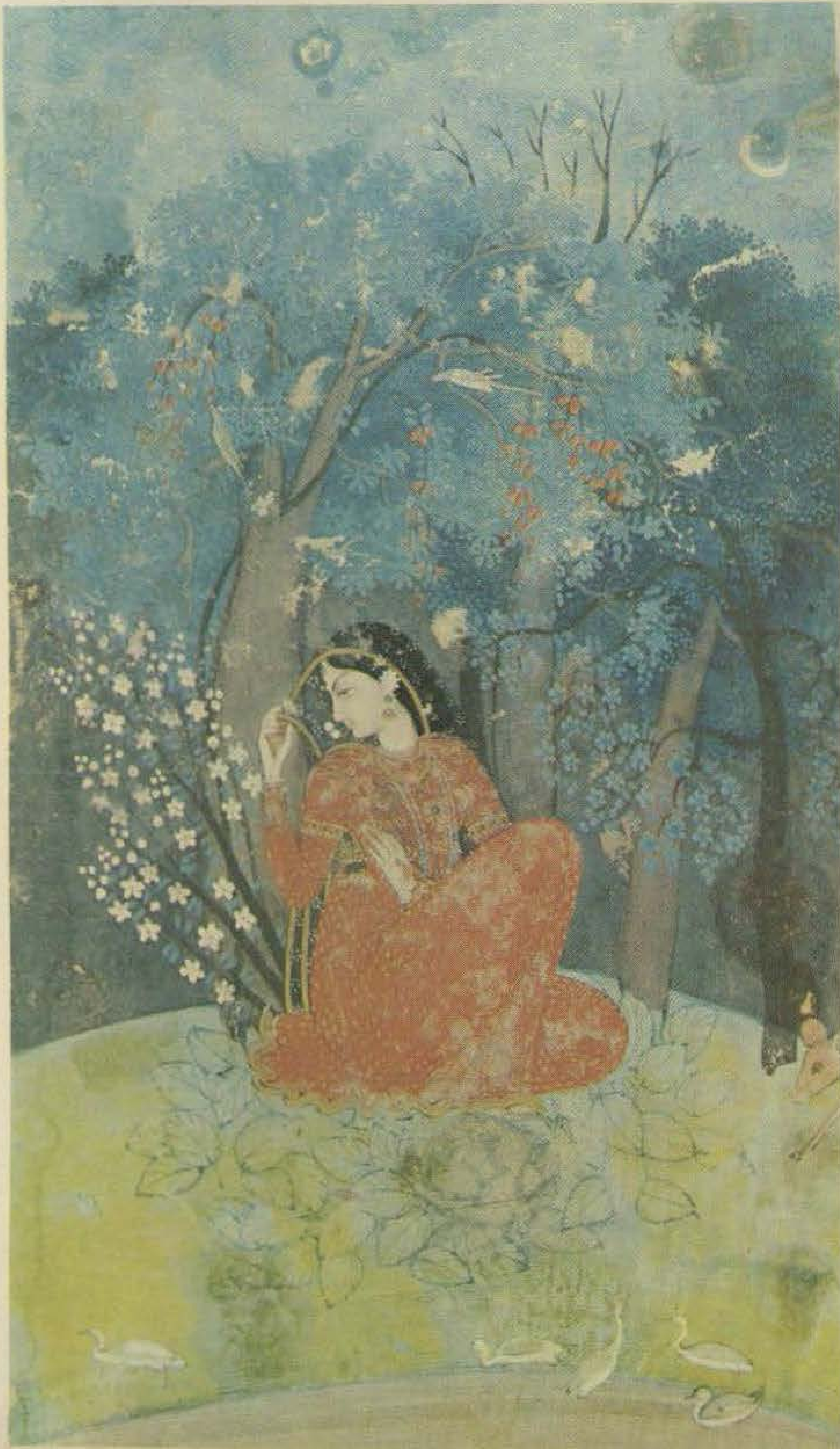


71. Two Sikh noblemen: scene of a visit with the two characters rendered as portraits.

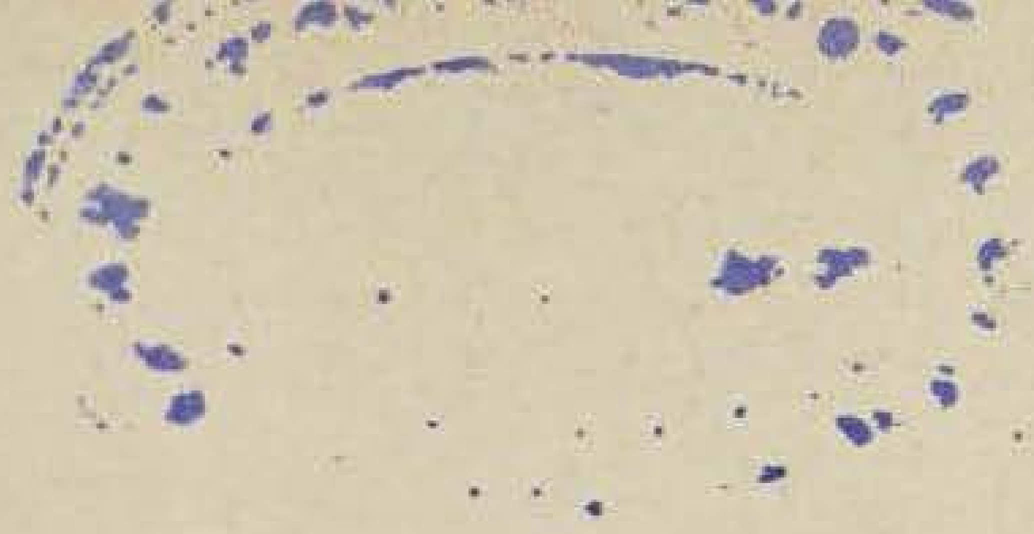
72. Episode in the legend of the goddess of the Ganges, Gangāvatarana. School of Kāngrā, late 18th century. Johnson Album XXXIV, folio 4. India Office Library, London.



73. Utkā Nāyikā: girl waiting for her lover. School of Kāngrā, late 18th century. British Museum, London.



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پادشاه جهانگیر و عباس شاه
دو شاه جوانبخت ظل اله
بشادی گرفته بکف جام جم
بدولت نشسته بپهلوی هم
جهان گرد آباد از عدلشان
بباشند آسوده خلق جهان
چو یار و برادر بهم درخورند
الهی بدولت ز هم برخورند